虹ヶ原ホログラフ

浅野いにお

Nijigahara Holograph
by Inio Asano

Translation note:

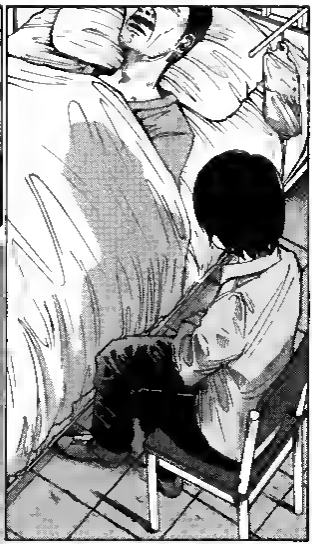
The story references a chant from a Japanese children's game called Hana Ichi Monme.
In this game, two teams of children line up and chant the song, then decide which person on the other team they want on their side.
The two children picked come forward and play janken (rock paper scissors), and the loser has to join the other team.

Stephen

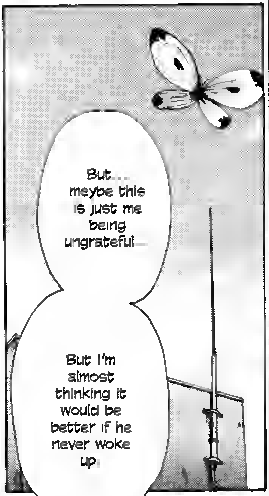
Mangascreener
#mangascreener @ irc.irchighway.net

bukuwawa

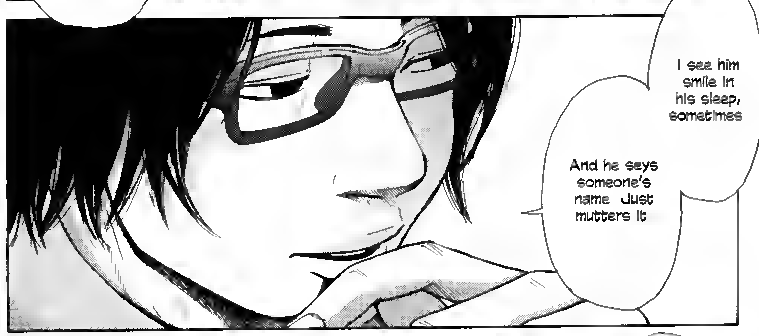
Over here!



How is he?
How is your father?
...well, his post-op progress hasn't been very good so far.
Uh...
You know about my dad?
He's been knocked out for the last few days.
...yes


But... maybe this is just me being ungrateful...
But I'm almost thinking it would be better if he never woke up.

I still have a lot to thank him for, though.
He *did* raise me to where I am now, even though we're not related by blood.


I see him smile in his sleep, sometimes.
And he says someone's name. Just mutters it.

I know it can't be my name...
He was always thinking about someone else. Someone who was already gone.

I've been having this dream of my own, lately...
So often that I wonder if what I'm seeing now is just the same dream.
Day by day, it feels more real...
And yet...

Every human being has their role in life.

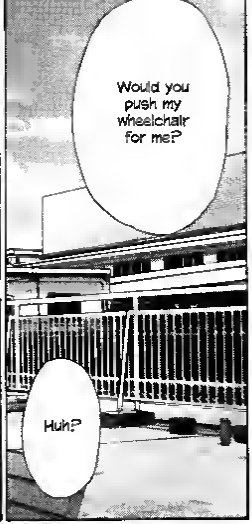
They just don't realize it.

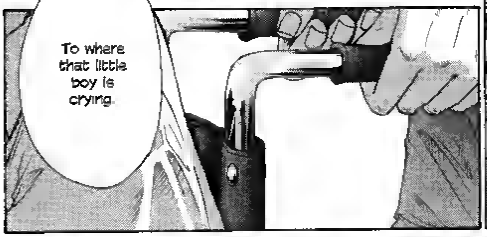
And yet, in the end,

you always wake up, and it's just you. Isn't that how it always works?

...who are you?

Just over there


Would you push my wheelchair for me?
Huh?


To where that little boy is crying.

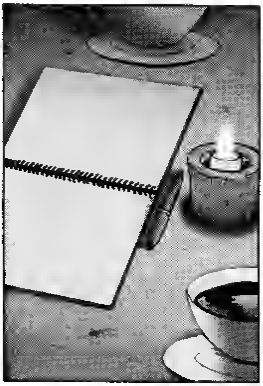
Methine
Fffn!
Fffn!

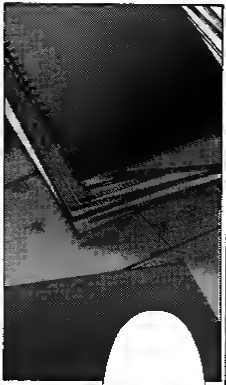
Ffh...

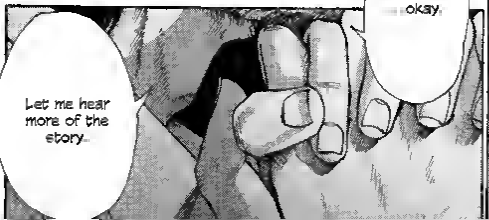
Ffh...

Ffh...

Ffh...







...oh well.
We have plenty of time
Sometimes it's nice to look back and reflect on the story so far

...what's wrong?

You seem restless tonight.

...now then.
How far back should we go?

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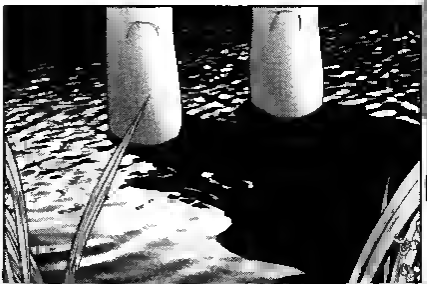
11

years ago

Over here!

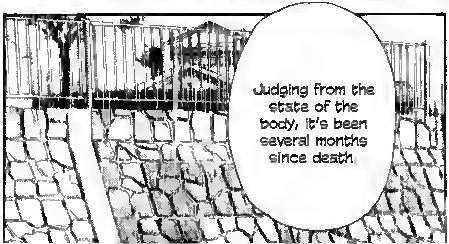
Over here!



And you're sure this is her?

This is my ex-wife, of six years ago.

...it's her.

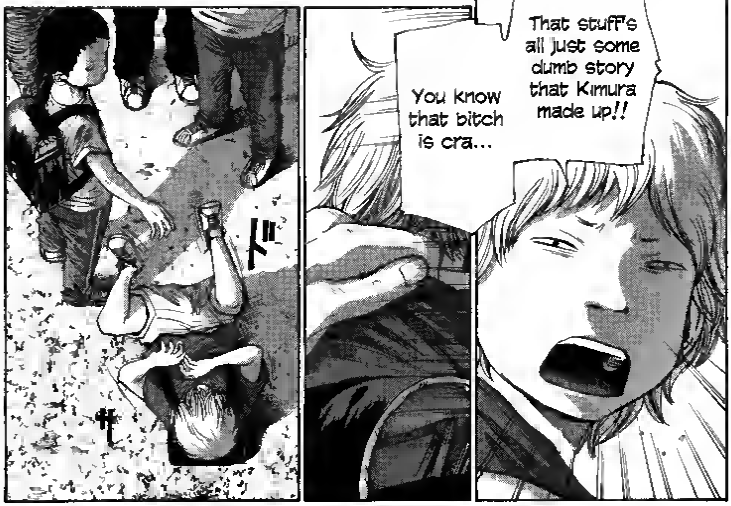

Judging from the state of the body, it's been several months since death.

Right after we divorced, she found another man...
She married someone else and moved to Saitama,
but went missing the next year, so a search was called...
...there are signs that someone was living inside this tunnel
Where could she have been during the five years she was missing!? And doing what?
...Mr Kimura,
this is just my personal curiosity speaking, but...
I have no idea, officer...
Please, just leave me alone
My daughter and I are happy now. We're at peace...
Speaking of which, there's a funny rumor going around the kids at the school
Something about the tunnel...

it's gonna end the world
There's like a ghost in the tunnel-
...what?
Wasn't it a monster?
Really?! *Really* really?!

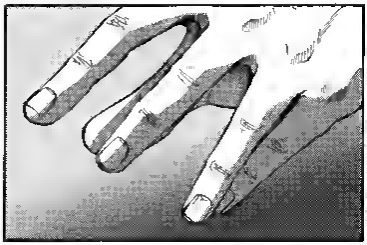
Yeah right!
Did you hear that if you offer a sacrifice to the monster, we'll be saved?
...what curse?
But I heard that Teacher's face got messed up because of the curse...
No, that's just made up, duh!!

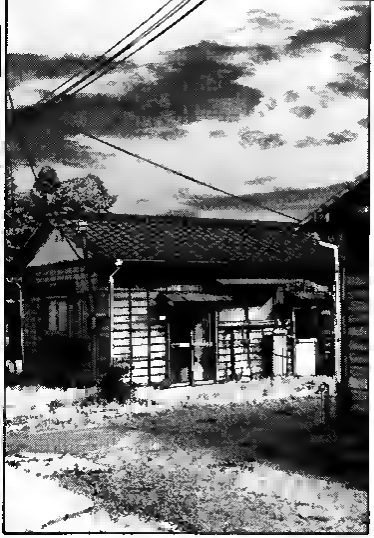
...well, what would we do if the world *really* ended?
You retard!!
Don't be a pussy!!

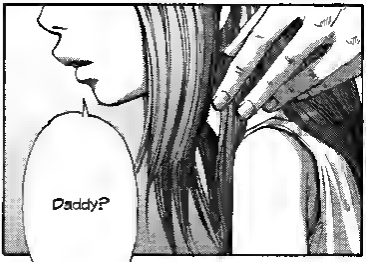

That stuff's all just some dumb story that Kimura made up!!
You know that bitch is cra...

What, Komatsuzaki?
wha

Don't talk about Arie that way






Daddy?

Is Mommy dead?

What?
That's what the lady across the street said.

"Being around your family is going to be the end of us."

And then she said,

Mommy is watching over you now!!

That's not true at all, Arie!!

Why...

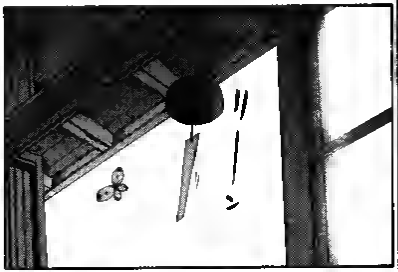
...yeah

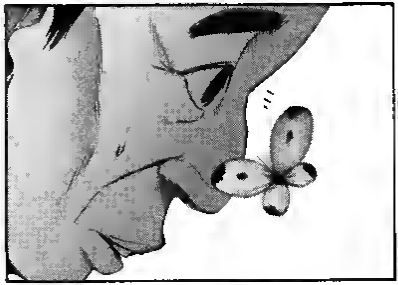
...yes, it's true that she died not long ago...

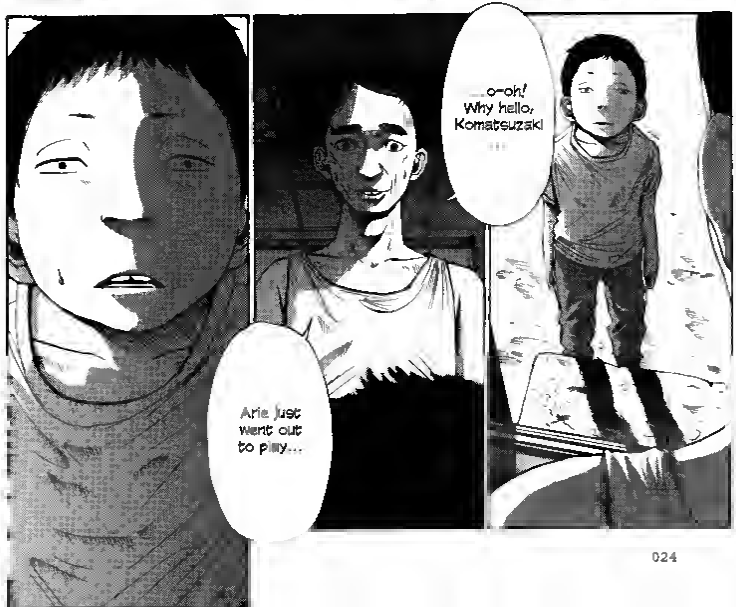
Now you run along and play... There's still some time before dinner.

...yeah.

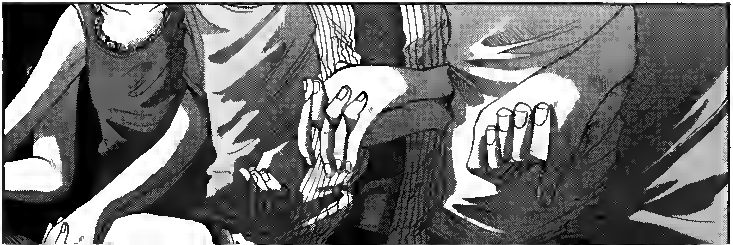
But you know what? Her soul has turned into a butterfly, and she's right by our side now...






...o-oh! Why hello, Komatsuzaki
Arie just went out to play...

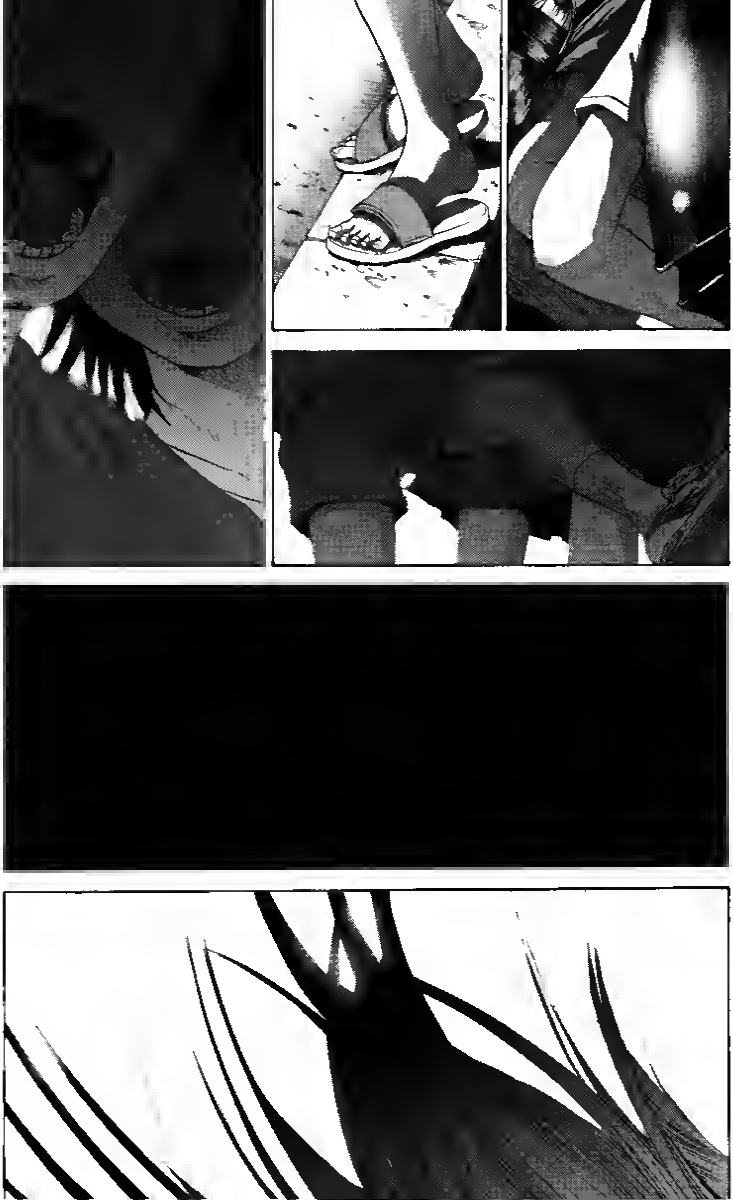
...hmm?

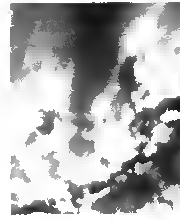


We're so happy that we won,
Hana Ichi Monme.

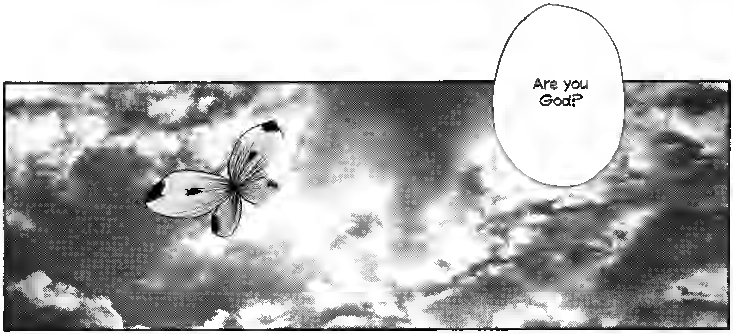
We're so
upset that
we lost,

Hana Ichi Monme.





"I can see, I can see.
I can see everything that happens in the world."



"No. But I might have met him before."

I was in the hospital a while.

And God felt so bad about my pain that he brought me a present.

This little tin box...

Hellooooo?

Suzuki!?

Inside the box!

Is a special magic that can make any wish come true, but only once.

For whatever reason, I'm still myself today.

Spring of 5th Grade.

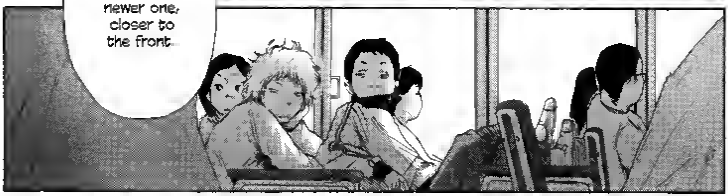
The sights and people are the same everywhere you go, right?

So what?

My first transfer to a new school, new town.

CHAPTER 1

... but there are two empty seats...
Oh! I'm sorry.

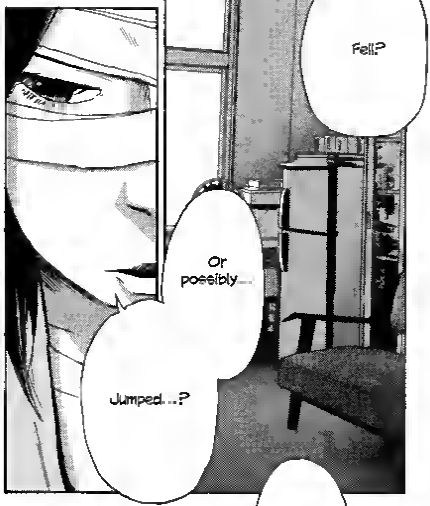

Your desk is the newer one, closer to the front.

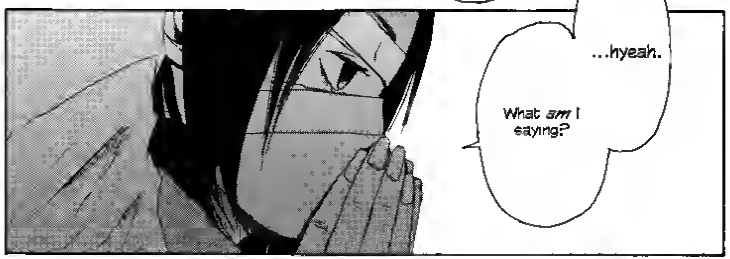
Hi.

Okaaay!
Easy, easy!! No running in the hallway.
5-1
Drawing?
Oh... it's just this drawing.
Why the long face, Ms Sakaki? You look really puzzled.
I had my class draw pictures of themselves "in the future".

Well, yes, *obviously*
But what does it mean?
Hmmmm... red. A lot of red.
Can you tell what this is?
Does it matter? Sometimes kids like to get creative
Hospital? Is he sick?
This was drawn by Suzuki. He just moved here from Tokyo.
There's something off about him...
No. He fell off the roof of his old school.
And he's behind in his studies, because of the time he spent in the hospital..

Ha ha ha
What, are you kidding?


Fell?
Or possibly...
Jumped...?


...hyeah.
What *am* I saying?

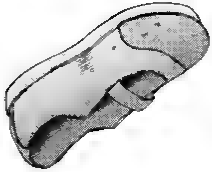
Juuu-ump!!
Juuu-ump!!
Juuu-ump!!

Just jump, already.
A fatty who can't jump is just a regular old fatty.
Oh, you boys!! Would you stop that?!
...I've had enough of this.
Is this class always like this?
Oh, you mean Komatsuzaki and his group?
Huh?
Boys can be so stupid

That's enough

What do you want?

You want someone to jump?



When I jumped off the roof of my old school,

I thought that would be a clean break.

But through a quirk of God's whim, I'm still alive.

What that means to me,

Are you retarded?

Forget him already Wanna leave?

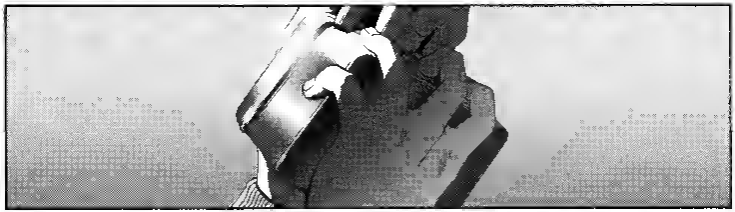
What the hell do you think you're doing?!

I'm not quite sure.

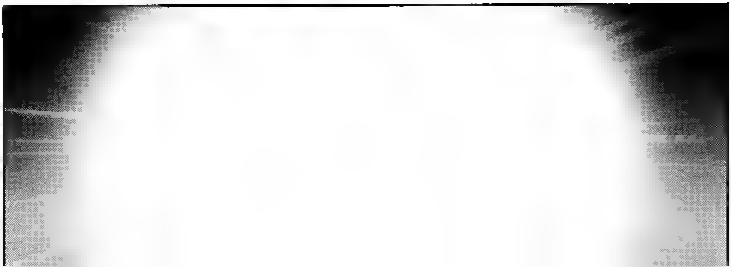
Suzuki?!

Helloooooo?
Suzuki!!?!
Is that him over there?
Did you see him?
I don't know if you were a messenger from God or what.
But I feel like...
I'll meet you again someday.

Bye-bye



Oh!



Suzuki,

did you ever see a sunset like that at your old place?

Are you going to fit in at your new school?
...how's it going?

Hang in there, kiddo.

I meekly responded with a yes.

I felt as though I had just lied.

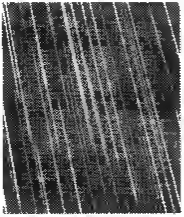
But the sunset was so bold and blinding

that I could have just forgotten

about everything.

Well,

ready to go back to class?



It comes every time I start to forget it.

Since I was 10.

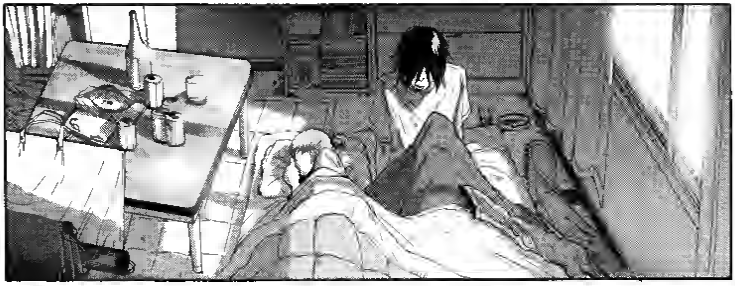
How many times have I seen this?

It's the tunnel... behind the elementary school, I think...

I go into the tunnel, as if guided there.

The butterfly says something to me as a child.

I had the dream again today.

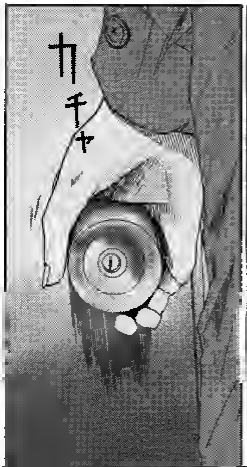


You two...
You're on break now...
Umm... Komatsu-zaki?
...what's the occasion?
You're not usually like this...
Would you like to get some food after work? I'll be buying for today.
Oh, I just found out that I'll be a fulltime employee next month.
So I'm in a bit of a good mood.

I actually brought my own meal...
Oh...

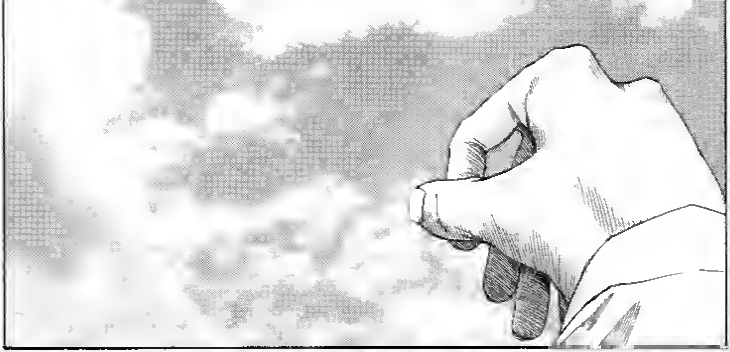
Well, that's all right, then...

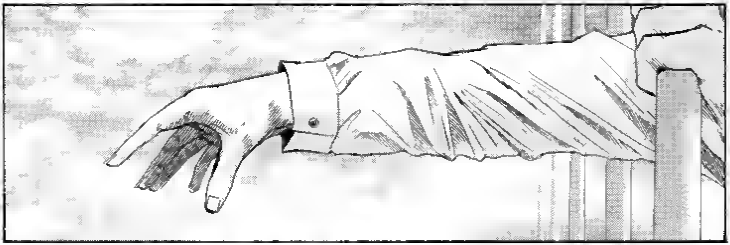
CHAPTER 2

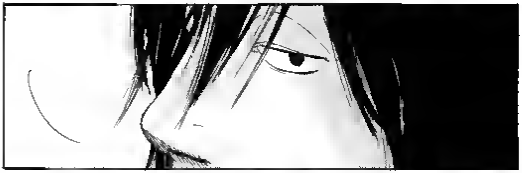

カチャ

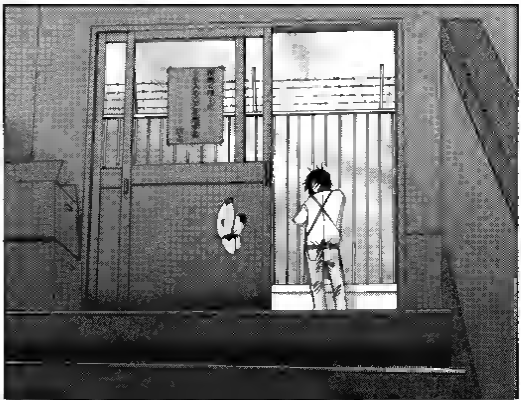
Thanks for letting me chill out here and stuff.
I'll leave now
Welcome back
Oh!
...sorry.
What was your name, again?
Huh?
You don't remember the teeny little girl with the short hair?
I'm Arakawa. From elementary school?
Remember? We ran into each other over near Seibu last night, had a few drinks
...seriously, I've repeated this a hundred times in the past 24 hours...

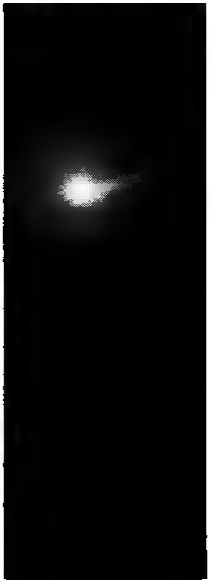
...huh
...I'm sorry.
I tend to forget stuff real quick...
Well, I'm leaving. Take this.
I'm working at this cafe...
prism cafe
Come on down, if you're bored
I'll give you a beer.





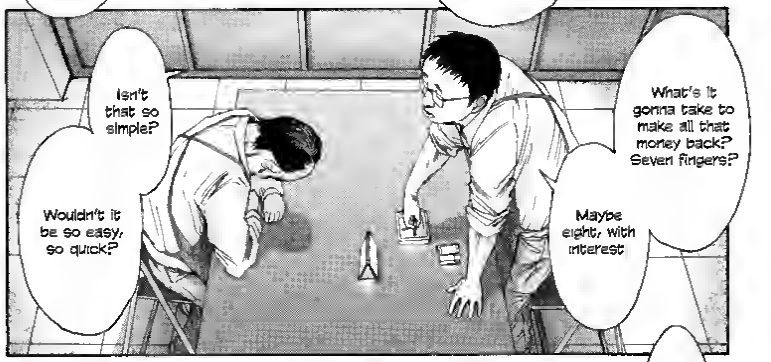






...I'm sorry.
Could you repeat that for me, sir?
I'm afraid I don't quite understand...
As I said
Starting next month, Mr. Kimura,
you will be an official fulltime employee, working behind the meat counter.
Yes, I meant...
The next part...

Mr Kimura.
The only reason you're working here is because you owe my old man money. Right?
We've got a machine that cuts the meat into real fine slices. Called a slicer.
But at this rate, you're never going to be able to pay it all back.
Fulltime employees get health insurance policies. Two million yen per finger if an accident should occur.

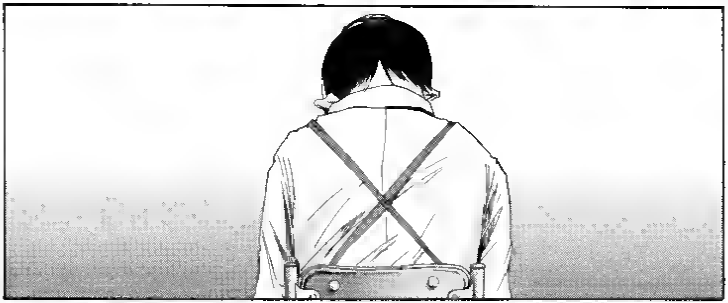

Isn't that so simple?
What's it gonna take to make all that money back? Seven fingers?
Wouldn't it be so easy, so quick?
Maybe eight, with interest.

b-but...
What would I do, after that...?

Huh?

What are you doing here? Your break's already up

How should I know?
Why don't you find some way to cut your own head off, too?



prism cafe

Welcome...
Come on in
Ohhh!
You actually came!
Take a seat anywhere. There's no one here anyways.
...no, it's cool.
I'm just leaving.
Huh? Did you come to see me, then?

...huh?

...tomorrow morning.

I want you to come to Nijigahara.

Niji-gahara...?

The "rainbow field" behind our old elementary school?

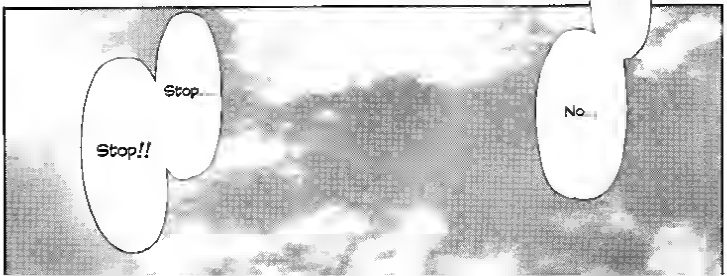
Huh

So that was an old class-mate?

He was kind of a bad boy. The one the other boys don't mess with.

You know how there's always one in every class.

Was he your first crush?
What?
Was I right?
Ha ha, I guess...
...huh?
...I dunno, though...


N...
No...
Stop...
Stop!!

...hey...
...this is really weird, Komatsuzaki...
What are you doing?
You've changed...
What's with that smile on your face?
...that looks cold...
Get out of the water...

...hey

Where are you going?

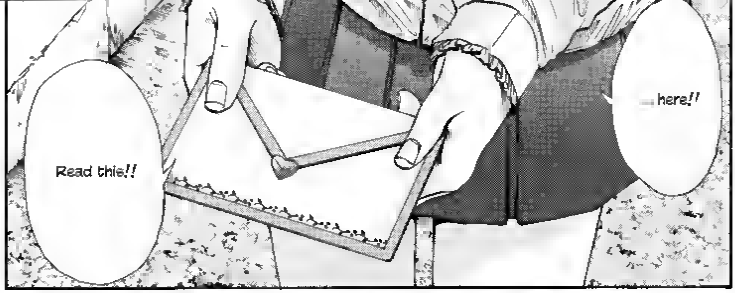
There's nothing in there!

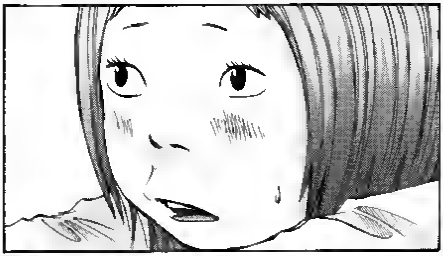
...is he retarded?

...then I heard the butterfly's voice.

For an instant, I wondered if my choice was truly the right one, but the darkness did not relinquish me.

The darkness soon engulfed my being.


Read this!!
...here!!



I don't think...
It would do much good if I took it anyway.

Wait, Komatsu-zaki!!
Wa...
Wait!

...I'm not going to fall in love with anyone ever again.
Are you still in love with Kimura?! Is that what this means?!
I can't protect a single person on my own.
Why don't you just forget about her?!
She's been in the hospital this whole time!!

What's that supposed to mean...?
.....

Is he retarded?

I was getting along with school better than I'd thought I could.

The spring air turned into an unpleasant, tepid breeze.

Maybe I was growing one step closer to an adult.

It's been two months since I moved here.

Signs: "Friend"

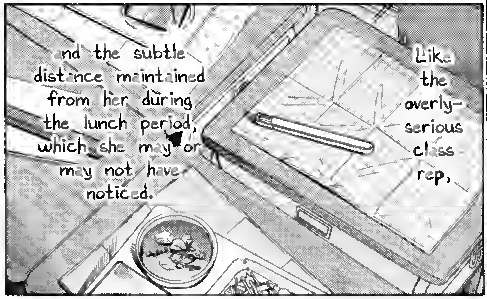
Sheesh. Living is this easy after all.

Passing around manga between class. Talking during gym in 5th period.

Laughing when everyone else laughs. I learned to do it all.

Like the bad boys in the class,
and the kid they always took behind the school every day to bully around.

When the teacher told me to "hang in there," I responded by trying just hard enough not to be too hard.


Like the overly-serious class rep,
and the subtle distance maintained from her during the lunch period, which she may or may not have noticed.

Like the future of the girl who was always writing in her notebook, the one the kids called "Thermos" behind her back, for some reason.

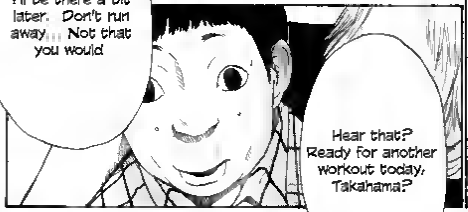
Just ignore them.

Just ignore them.

CHAPTER 3

...all right, same place as usual

...that was a lie.

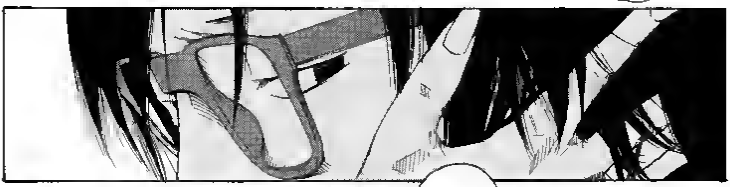

I'll be there a bit later. Don't run away... Not that you would

Hear that? Ready for another workout today, Takahama?

Just ignore them.

Suzuki...
Are you going home alone, again?
Want me to walk part of the way with you?
Goodbye, Mei Sakaki
Take care on the way home...
...I can get home by myself

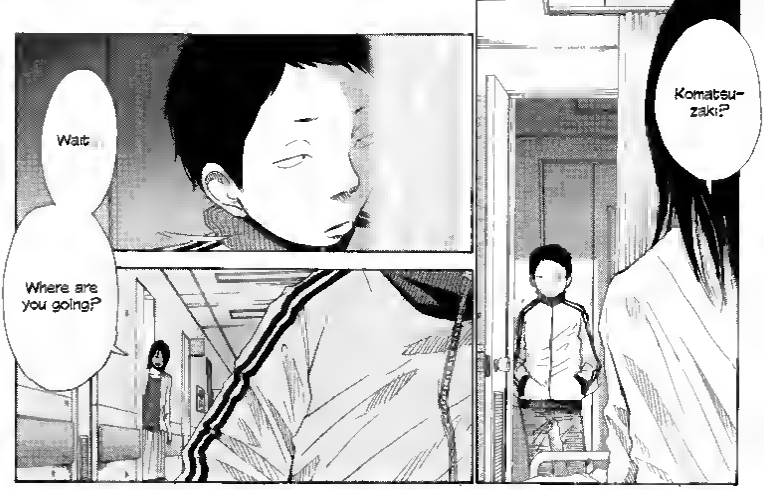
Are you okay?
You getting along?

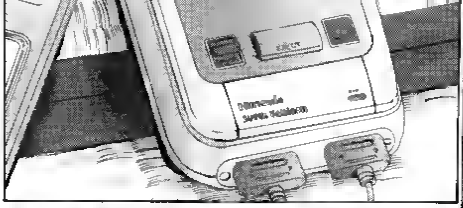


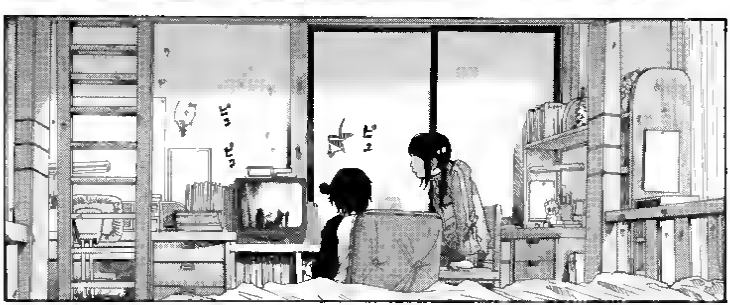
Oh, Higure
Good timing.

okay?
Your houses are both in the same direction
Don't be shy, now
...That's not it, Teacher.
Adults and children live in different worlds.
...But it can't be helped.
My brother has a Super Nintendo.
...Suzuki,
If you come to my house,

How is Arie doing, sir? Any progress?
Ha ha... None, I'm afraid
Her injuries have healed, and she ought to be conscious again.
But she's just not coming to. She doesn't respond to my voice at all
If you'll excuse me,
I work the night shift.
HOSPITAL
CLIN
INTERNAL
RESPIRA
PHYSIOTHERAPY (REH
Arie Kimura


Wait
Where are you going?
Komatsu-zaki?

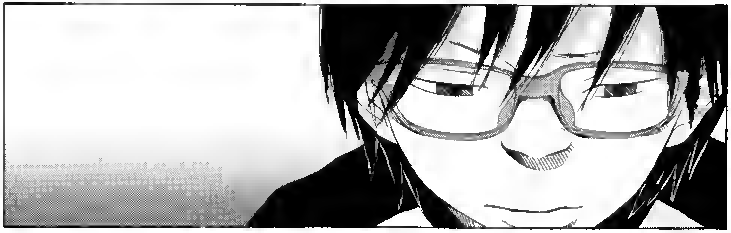

Diary



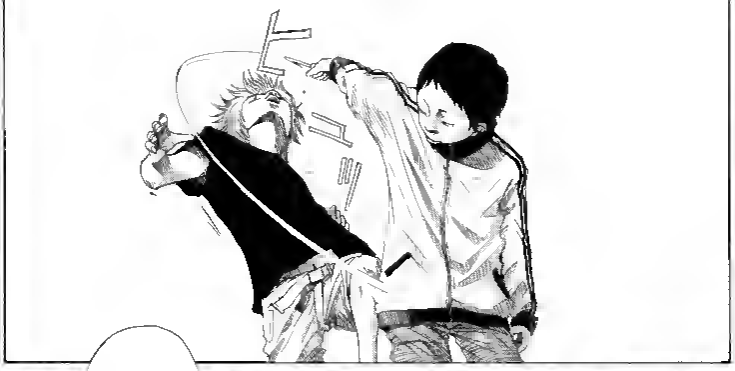
Suzuki...
You were looking at me all today during school, weren't you?

...huh?
I can make some tea. And we have cookies.
Why did I even come here...
Heeheehee.
...I'll just leave.
You want something to drink?
Diary
Monster in the tunnel
Diary

The world will end.



But there are people all over the world who hurt a lot more.
Does it hurt? Yeah, I bet it does.
Compared to them, your life would be heaven.
I dunno, man... Komatsu-zaki's just kind of crazy these days.
He doesn't even want money anymore. He just wants to hit people.
You can't do that! What are you, crazy?
It started when Kimura went to the hospital...
Yeah, but... We can't do anything about that...
Why?! Takahama doesn't even fight back anymore! What's the point?!
Ah...
Hey, no!!



You'll do, then

...dude... I can't stand this any-more...
If you love Kimura that much...
Then why don't...
You go and join her!!
...I hate being around you...

is that we live in a crazy world.

...that's right. The only answer

Take that!

I think, God is watching me from somewhere, and will grant my wishes someday.

I think about, what if I could hear the arts voices.

I think, of course not. In 10 years I'll just be another boring adult

Uff...

Uff...

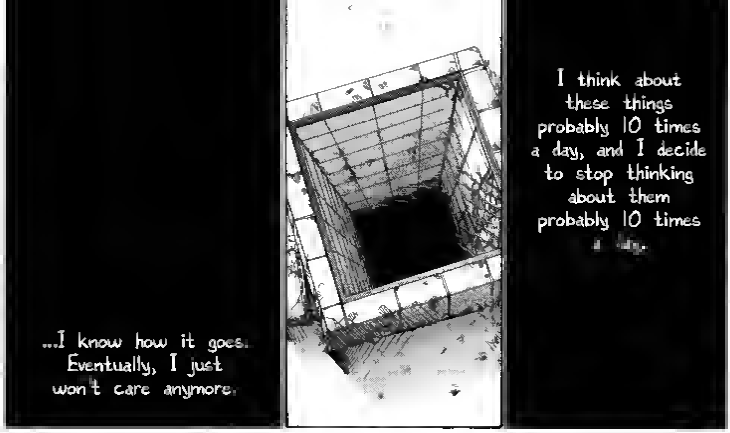
Uff...

H... Hey... Is he dead? Did you kill him?

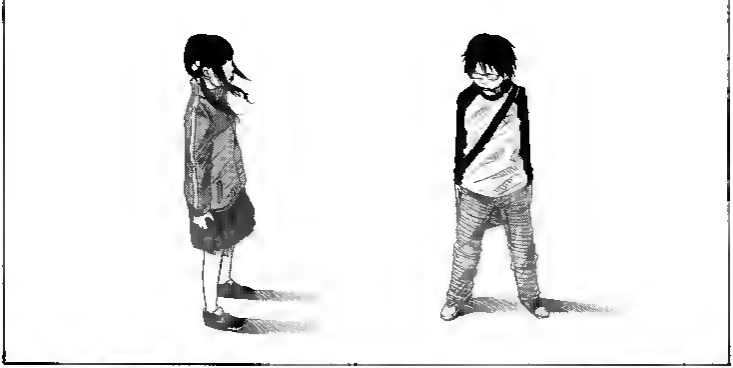
...hey...

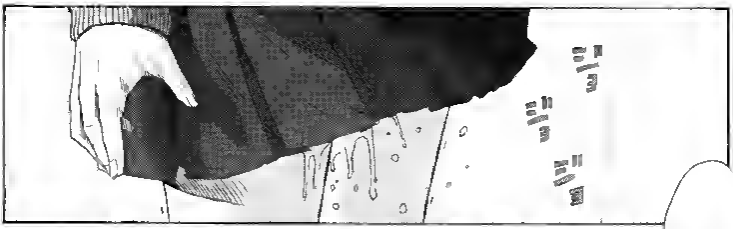
Are you just gonna leave him like this?

Are you really gonna do this?


I think about these things probably 10 times a day, and I decide to stop thinking about them probably 10 times a day.
...I know how it goes. Eventually, I just won't care anymore.

Why did you follow me?
...what about you?
Why did you leave without telling me?
Suzuki
...because...
I love you
God, you're such an ugly creep!!





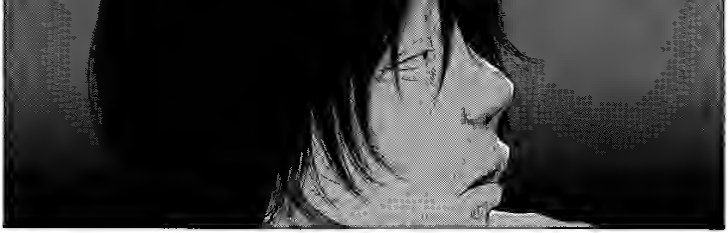
I wanted to tell her off so harshly, she'd never recover.
For some reason, I couldn't stand her.
You're so mean...
What a terrible thing to say...
...I'm gonna tell on you...
I'm gonna tell everyone horrible things about you!!
...But I knew she wouldn't be able to tell anyone about this.

A sudden downpour broke out.

Rain that fell so heavy it hurt when it struck.

I hoped it would wash away the filth on me, on her, on everyone.

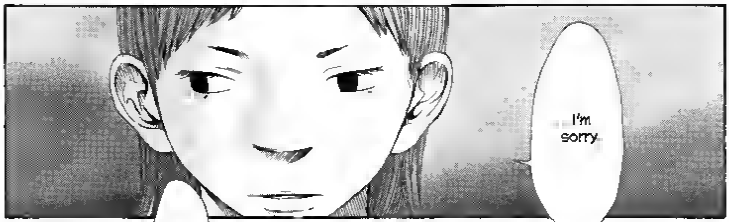
But it soon abated, and left the town with a horrible, clinging humidity.



Arakawa.

Are you expecting to find work with oils right out of school?
If all you're going to do is graduate and work in an office,
I can give you a passing mark
ART INSTI

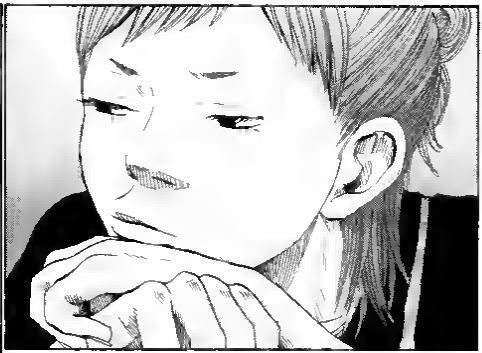
I want some emotion, some feeling
But your painting is all detail and nothing else
It's just... boring
I want you to show me *something!!*


I'm sorry

Mmmm.
C'mon Arakawa, don't get bummed out.
You know him, he's trying to be some motivational artiste, all "Throw your emotion onto the canvas!"
But all he has to do is collect a paycheck each month. It's a joke.

Look, your boyfriend's waiting in the hall. Why don't you have him cheer you up?
Ugh. If that horny dipstick tells me to "hang in there" one more time, I'll sock him
Yikes. You do get tired of them quickly.
What a waste! He's young and rich
Tell him I already left
You can have him, then

CHAPTER 4



I'm just a little upset about one of my classes

Huh?

You look put out

Oh no no! I'm fine

What's wrong?

Plus, I was up early this morning

If you're tired, I can close the store early.

Nobody's coming, anyway.

Sigh...

prism cafe

I feel bad about this, boss...

Ha ha ha.

Good evening

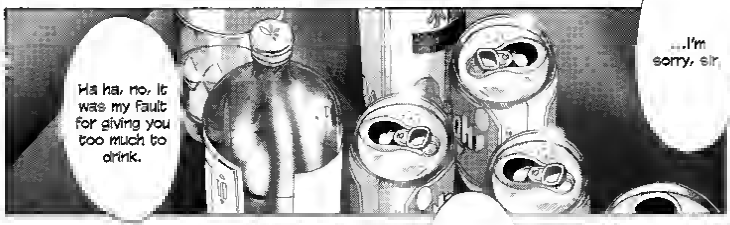
Ah, pardon me.
We're with the police.
Can... we help you?
Isn't it hot? And it was so chilly just days ago.
You see funny weather every year, but this one just feels abnormal.
Do you recognize this man?
We believe he visited this cafe last night.
Kota Komatsuzaki. He's wanted for murder and assault.
...umm, well... I ran into him for the first time in years...

He was a classmate of mine in grade school, and I invited him to stop by the cafe...
Do you know what might have happened after that?
But he left right away
...no idea.
Well, that's all I have to ask about for today...
But we'll be back to speak more, later.
...I see.

...hmm?

Ummm...
Could I stay at your place?

Are you all right, Maki?


Ha ha, no, it was my fault for giving you too much to drink.
...I'm sorry, sir.

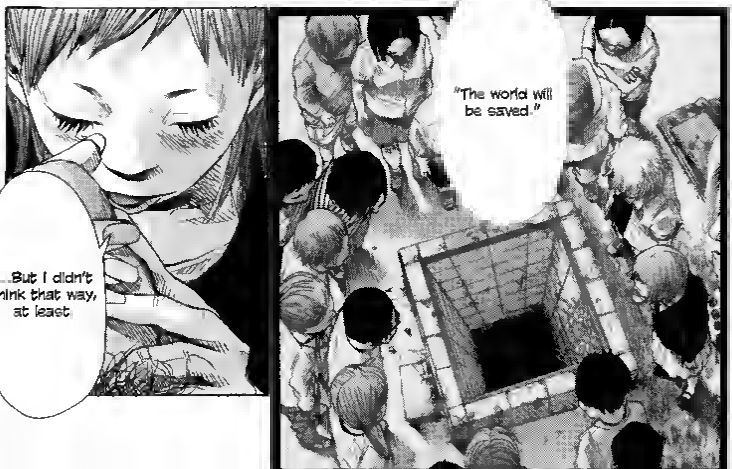
Anyone can draw well if they practice.
I took a look at your art while you were in there. Hope you don't mind. It's good!
But my problem comes before that. It's an emotional thing I guess.

Hmmm... Well...
I don't know much about art, but I like what you've done.

I always feel like there's another side to girls who act happy and nice like you
Like something deep down, that you can't tell to other people
...but I'll hear you out, if you want to talk...
...when I was a little girl,
I tried to kill one of my friends
...actually, it was all of the class, together...
We pushed her down a well.
She was a beautiful little girl, with pale skin and long hair...

Thinking back on it now, it was just our imaginations getting carried away,
but at the time, we were all terrified of the story.
The "monster in the well" is going to "end the world."
she began to tell us. For some reason she took it so seriously.

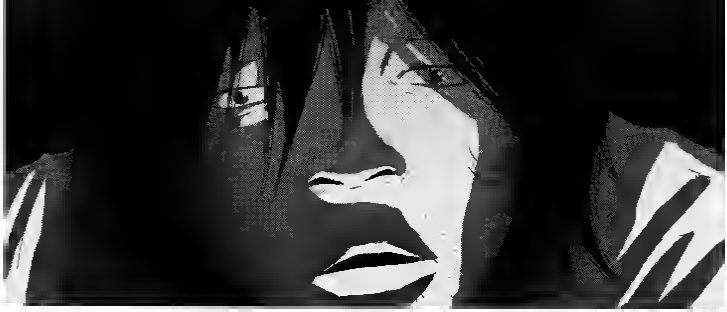
"Maybe if we get rid of her,"
カチャ
カチャ
...so we all got to thinking.


...But I didn't think that way, at least.
"The world will be saved."

...and that was the guy from yesterday?
I was only jealous of her, because she was friends with the boy I liked
That's why I wanted her to die...

Maybe you've just never truly fallen in love with someone before.

gasp...!
Oh my God! What am I doing?!
I'm sorry!! I should be going home!!



...it's all right, Boss. You don't have to walk me home

I dunno... I'm a little worried about letting you go back on your own...
...please don't be too nice to me
Plus I want to apologize. I think I made you say some things you might not have wanted to...
It's going to spoil me...

And after seeing how he's changed, and how I'm living carefree and trying to forget my past
It's just... I had forgotten all about that. But seeing Komatsuzaki again made me remember.
It's all right. That's all in the past, and I was a little drunk.
I'm just feeling kind of disgusted with the way time passes.

...that's how it goes.

Hmm?
Huh?

...I've got it, Maki.
Why don't you turn this sight into a painting?
Ha ha, that can't be
It's probably just the moon reflecting off of them
...It's so beautiful...
Do you see how they're all faintly glowing?
but...
I don't know. Some population explosion from the unseasonal weather?
What is it...?

I can't.
It's *too* beautiful.

Okay class, summer vacation begins tomorrow

But remember to come to school and the pool,

on the days that are marked on the vacation schedule I just passed out.

I felt like the mood in class improved markedly after Komatsuzaki fell and hit his head.

I came from outside, so I don't know the deeper relationships between everyone, and I don't care to know,

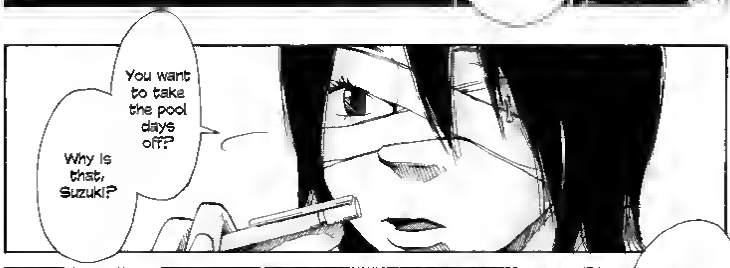
but I like that the class is at peace.

And don't be lazy and avoid your homework, just because it's hot.

Now goodbye, everyone

Suzuki, wanna go to the arcade with us?

Uh, sorry, I need to talk to the teacher
...I kind of don't like the fact that I'm actually fitting in with these people.
Really? Well, that's where we'll be.


You want to take the pool days off?
Why is that, Suzuki?

I kind of have a concave chest, so my heart and lungs are weak
I'm not supposed to have really rough exercise.

Hmmm...

Well, if you think you shouldn't go in the water, that's your choice.

But I hope you'll at least come to school and watch everyone else.

...yes ma'am

CHAPTER 5

All right, everyone who's not swimming, your job is to clean up the school.

I know it's hot, so don't work too hard.

Okay Teacher.

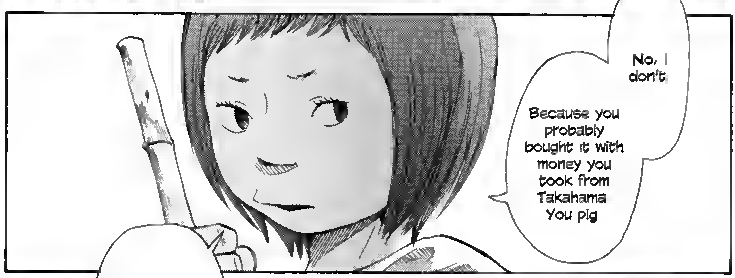
Oh, and Suzuki,

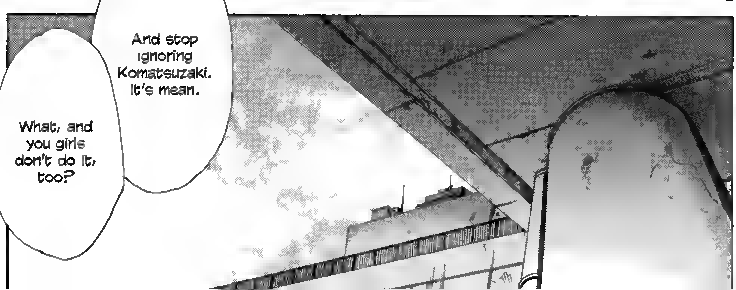
It's not a competition, so if you want to just float in the water, that's okay.

And you can keep your t-shirt on if you don't want people to see your chest.

Huh? Hello?

I'm not like you and your friends, Hayato.
C'mon, Arakawa.
It's summer vacation, don't clean up. Just hang out like me.
Heh heh. What, are you kidding?
Want a drink?


No, I don't.
Because you probably bought it with money you took from Takahama. You pig.


And stop ignoring Komatsuzaki. It's mean.
What, and you girls don't do it, too?

Ouch!
It was you who hurt Komatsuzaki, wasn't it?
...Who cares if we leave him out? He's stupid.
I don't *want* to make the class worse for everyone
But someone's gotta take charge and keep the balance, right?
Komatsuzaki just hits people. He doesn't think about the consequences.
We were being considerate to him because of what happened to Kimura, but not anymore. It's pointless with him.
...you're so stupid
I don't want to hear about that anymore.
Why don't you just go home?

5-3
Suzuki
Broom
Ugly ugly!!
Just leave me alone, Mr. Hatori!!

But I don't understand!! Why are you avoiding me?!
When I have so much love for you, Kyoko!!
...that I was extremely drunk at that party last week...
And you were extremely forceful...
Just forget it ever happened...
And don't call me by my first name in school
Plus, I've been thinking about it, myself...
And I don't think that I can see someone as pure and straightforward as you are...
...wh-
What is that supposed to mean, Ms. Sakaki?

...that, and,
the fact that you're too considerate to ask about my facial injury...
What does that have to do with anything?!
A difference in our teaching style?
Like, the direct way you treat your pupils. I just can't handle that.
But I want to tell you.
Around the end of last spring, before you came to work here,
I saw one of the girls in my class being attacked by a man on Nijigahara behind the school.
Of course, I tried to help her. She was one of my own students.

It's a terrifying thing, and I wish I could change it, but...
The man used a cinder block... to try to crush my eye.
He got away, and now he's living out there somewhere, totally free...
But even worse,
was that I couldn't help but despise the little girl who got me involved in the first place.
It was explained as an accident, but it might have been an extension of bullying from the other children.
Some time afterward, she fell into a well... She's still in the hospital.
Every time I saw her beautiful skin and frail little body, I just felt *sick*.
You knew she was being bullied, and you didn't stop them?
That's right.

There are probably still more bullied kids in my class even now,

...Kyo...

...I mean, think about it!!

You'll never last if you deal with every little fight those kids have!!

But... I just can't find it in me to care anymore.

It's so stupid to waste your life to ease someone *else's* problems!!

Kyoko... Your problem is that you're *too* serious...

What I love isn't you as a teacher,

it's you as a person.

I love you!!

...Stop it.

Kyoko...

...ah!

Mm...!

Kyoko...

Hahh

Ms. Sakaki, please come to the pool immediately.

...Stop doing that.

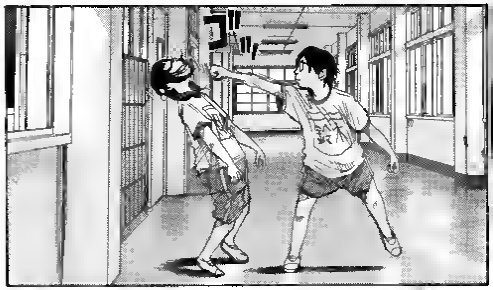
Hahh

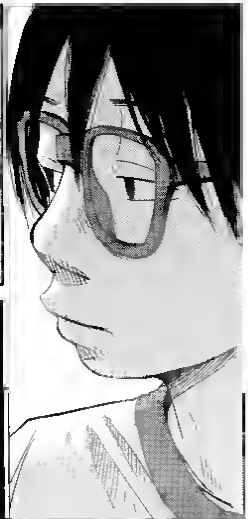
Hahh

No...

If someone sees us.

You wouldn't betray me, would you, Higure?





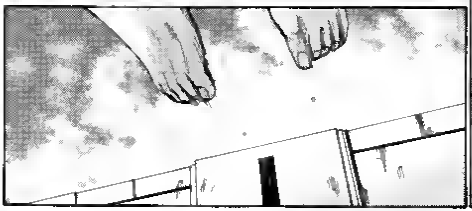
That day, the temperature reached 39 degrees Celsius, the hottest point in the entire year.

Stop doing that to me!!

What's up, Suzuki? Gonna go for it?
Okay everyone, in your positions!
Teacher, if I drown and die, what would you do?
Huh?
Shut up
Arakawa, wanna be my girlfriend?
In your positions!!

The call of the cicadas and the unbearable heat were making me woozy.

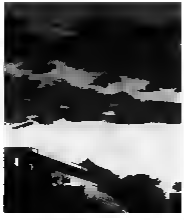
I felt like the glimmer of the surface was calling to me, sucking me in.



For an instant,

I felt that I could swim anywhere in the world.

But I didn't even know how to doggy paddle yet.



I've been having dreams lately.

Dreams from when I was a teacher.

I remember the fun memories, the painful memories,

but the faces and names of the children are vague, as if covered by a fog.

I haven't had a pleasant awakening on a Sunday morning in years.

But I like the morning on clear days. It makes me feel like everything has been forgiven.

City employee arrested for indecency. Expectations of a cool summer to affect crop harvest...

Supermarket owner stabbed to death and employee injured in parking lot.
Reports of swarms of butterflies around the city...
Local section's always got the most boring news.
...what are you staring at me for?
No reason...
Just thinking, you're always the same, even on a day like this.
...really?

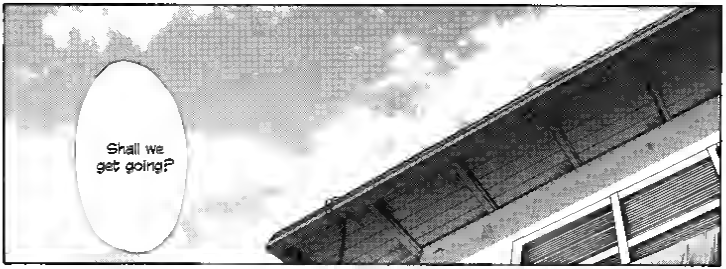
It's our last moment together.
There's a place I'd like to visit.
...can we go on a walk after we turn in the divorce papers?
You see? Like that. You never say "thanks for the meal" after you're done.

CHAPTER 6

Shall we take a break?

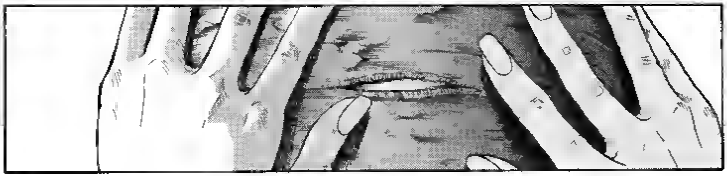
I go ahead
May I take your plate?
prism
Are those twins you've got there?
Awful cute.
What's up? I said you could take today off.
Heh heh. Actually, I wanted to give you something.
Hellooo.
...huh? Miki?

Maki, you look like you haven't slept a wink.
Yeah, actually that's almost right...
...oh welcome to Prism Cafe...


Shall we get going?

This is where you wanted to visit?
Doesn't it take you back?
This is the place we met. Over 10 years ago now.

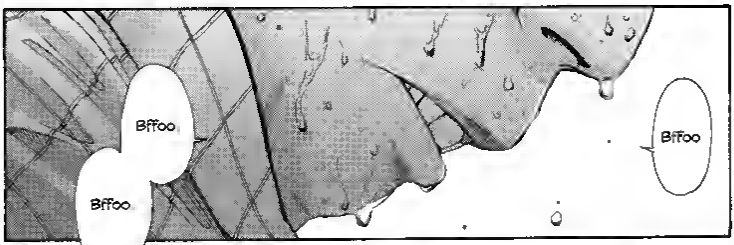
Hey, you can't just walk in there.
Schools are a lot more cautious these days.
Oh, who's going to care?

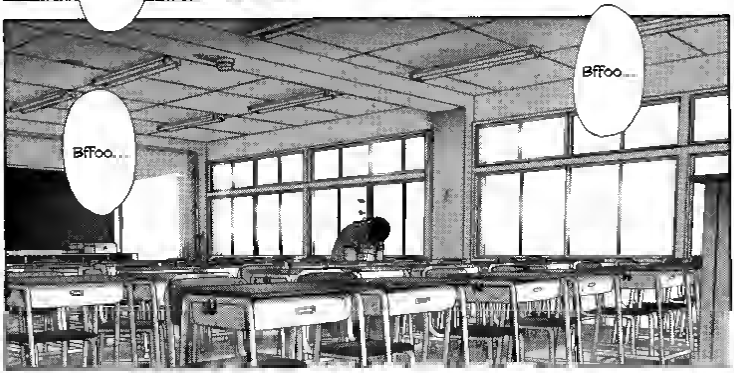


...huh?
Oh... Nothing, just my imagination
I get the feeling that someone's inside the school building
What is it?
...someone broke in? Should we call the police?
I don't know
Does it matter? We're not teachers here anymore.
By the way, that girl from the cafe was one of my pupils
She probably doesn't remember me anymore. That's what time will do
You've certainly changed in these 10 years.
It's plenty of enough time to change someone.

I wonder...
What they're all doing now...

bffoo
bffoo
bffoo


Biffoo
Biffoo
Biffoo


Biffoo...
Biffoo...

I remember her being a nice teacher, but the memories are hazy... Ms. Sakaki, I think.
I don't believe it! I swear to God, that was my elementary school teacher!
Wait, but her one eye was wrapped up with bandages, because she got hurt...
I don't think she realized it was me.
Oh well, it doesn't matter anyway.
So, I can really have this painting, Maki?
Absolutely!!
I painted it because I wanted you to have it.
...I think it's the first time I've ever painted something with a clear purpose in mind.
Oops, gotta go. I've still got an assignment to turn in tomorrow!

Would you like to come over to my place for dinner, then?

Huh?

...No, not after class gets out

Maki, do you have anything to do tomorrow?

What?

Sure!!

It's kind of terrifying to think about.
I don't know what any of those children are doing now.
But sometimes I think about how the smallest, careless action of mine could have affected them.

Hopefully they've forgotten all about me.
but I'm sure some of them hated me
You still keep trapping emotions deep inside you.
That's never changed as long as I've known you.

...it's been a long time since I visited Rainbow Field.
You really want to be here?
It's not a place with very pleasant memories for you
...oh,
they're tearing it down.
CE OF CONSTRUCTION
GRHARA (TWO CHILDREN FIELD)
L BE UNDERGOING CONSTRUCT
STARTING IN EARLY AUGUS
VE APPRECIATE THE UNDERST
AND COOPERATION OF
NEIGHBORHOOD RESIDE
Huh? Two Children Field? Not Rainbow?
...there's an old folktale about monsters called kudan in this town, stretching back generations
There was a custom of washing dead kudan down the river.
Kudan? The monster with the head of a human and the body of a cow?
Yep. They prophesy disease and bad crops and then die.

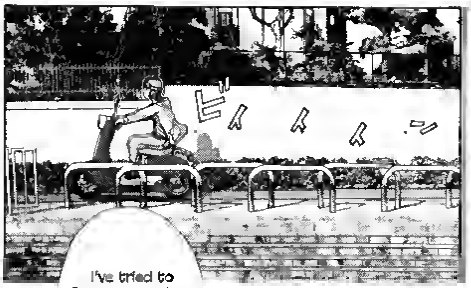
It was said that if you sent a single kudan down the river up there, it would wash up as twin kudan right here.

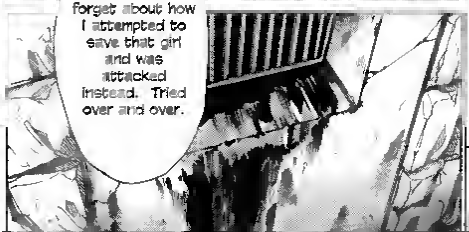
So they called it Two Children Field. Over time, I [illegible] people thought the pronunciation stood for Rainbow Field.

Work as a teacher around here for long enough, and you'll learn a few party discussion topics.

...It's just a stupid story, anyway.

That's not a very pleasant story.





I've tried to forget about how I attempted to save that girl and was attacked instead. Tried over and over.

Don't dredge up the painful memories of the past.
You probably don't want to hear me talk about this now.
Even after marrying you, my fear of man never went away...
I had the scars hidden with plastic surgery, but it doesn't change what's beneath.
...you know what?
It's like the same as people that live with filthy sewage water.
That's why my heart will never be steady for as long as I live.
You can try to forget it, or hide it, but it's inside you, all the way into the deepest part.
But you're more clever than I am... it's frustrating to me.

When are you going to leave the house?

I'll send my luggage tomorrow, and leave the next day...

After I kill you and the kids

ビィィィ

Sorry, would you mind heading back now?
I want to stay here and think.
Can you really survive on your own?
It's supposed to rain tonight, so don't be out too late.

...how happy I would be if the last dozen-some years were just a dream the younger me was being...
But that's just wishful thinking.

...I'm sorry

Hello?

...searching for something...

You there, what are you doing?
Searching?

You want some help?

Onoda.

Here.

Kato

Here

Summer ended, the green gorged leaves fell,

autumn passed,

and, having regained equilibrium,

I saw the days pass without notice.

Komatsuzaki is absent again.

Saito.

Here.

Suzuki.

...or rather, I lived as if I wanted them to pass without notice.

...here.

Suzuki, try to call out a bit louder when I say your name.

Pardon my interruption, Ms. Sakaki

Hayato Wakamatsu!

Huh?

Come to the faculty room after lunch.

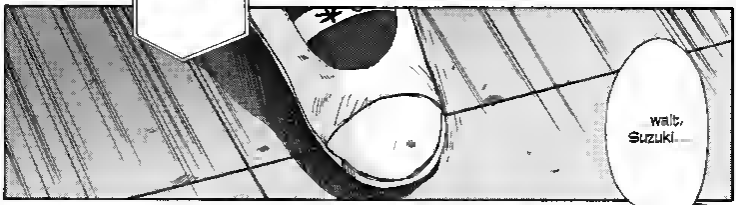
...because if I didn't, I felt as if a moment's carelessness would lead to a breakdown.

CHAPTER 7

...Hayato?
Man, that teacher...
He's *scary* when he's mad...
He hit me as hard as he could...
...It's like, what do my parents have to do with anything?
My mom's going to show up here after school...
Takahama told his parents and teacher that we were taking his money
...what happened?
And wait in the classroom after school...

I didn't even mean for things to go the way they did.
...Why did it have to turn out this way?
Guess what I know?
Originally he gave you the money because he wanted to be friends
But over time, things just get built up...
It becomes harder to change your ways...
I guess this means I got a bit carried away, doesn't it?
Ha ha... Yeah, at first, sure.

Komatsuzaki... He would call Takahama out to beat him up...
It's time for recess, everyone.
But I think I understand why he wouldn't take his money...
Run along and play nicely.


...wait, Suzuki...

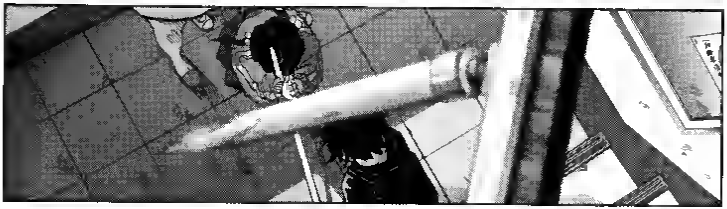
Hello...?

...well, Takahama,
do you think you've won, with this?

You know what I think, Takahama?
At this rate, you're going to grow up into a terrible, worthless person.
You're no longer the victim. Now *you're* the aggressor.
Because you used a power that the other guy can't overcome?
Is that the way you settle things?
... are you going to answer me, Takahama?
Or do I have to push you right out this window?
What in the world are you doing?!

Get out of the way!!
What's going on, Suzuki?!
Mama...
What is the meaning of this?!
Just what kind of education do you employ at this school?!
Come on, Suzuki... Apologize...
...Suzuki?
He's a new student. He moved here this year.
I don't know this boy...
Well, I'd like to have a word with his parents. I can't imagine what kind of dreadful home life he leads!
Speak for yourself, bitch.

What a disgrace! I cannot believe that I have been leaving my dear son in the care of such a wretched place!!
Please, Mrs Takahama, settle down!!
Wha...?!
Why, I have never been so insulted in my life!!
Are you people insane?!
Despicable!!
Imbeciles!!
Nincompoops!!
...oops



...why,
why are you helping *him*...?

Cowards,

Sloths,

Liars...

Scoundrels...

Suzuki...

You can't do this...

...why,

I think this little boy must be insane!!

There is not a single decent person

in this place.

...as long as I have the box that God gave me,
I can do anything

...I mean, I'm sorry. I shouldn't have said that.
It's obviously very important to you.
Ha ha ha, so it's like a good-luck trinket for you?

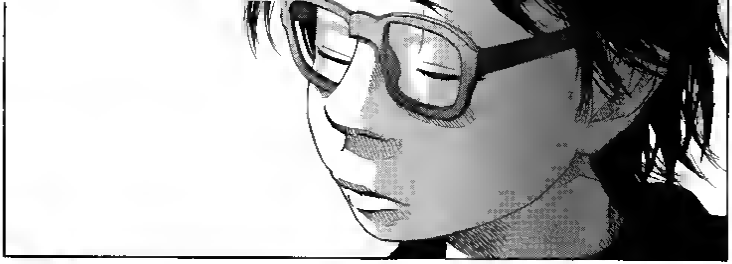
...you'll be fine,
as long as you don't lose sight of your ideals

...but I think that everyone grows up and becomes an adult
by losing things that are precious to them.

I once lost something very precious here, as well

I just feel like it's stupid to be tied to material possessions.
It's very important to me personally.
...I know.
I found it in the river to begin with.
I'll give you something of my own.
Suzuki!!...
I couldn't find the box...
Oh...
Big Brother?
Didn't know you had a guy friend
Suzuki's a mysterious little boy.

really
Really?
By the way, you've been reading my diary, haven't you?
...no, I haven't...
Are you lying to me?
yes



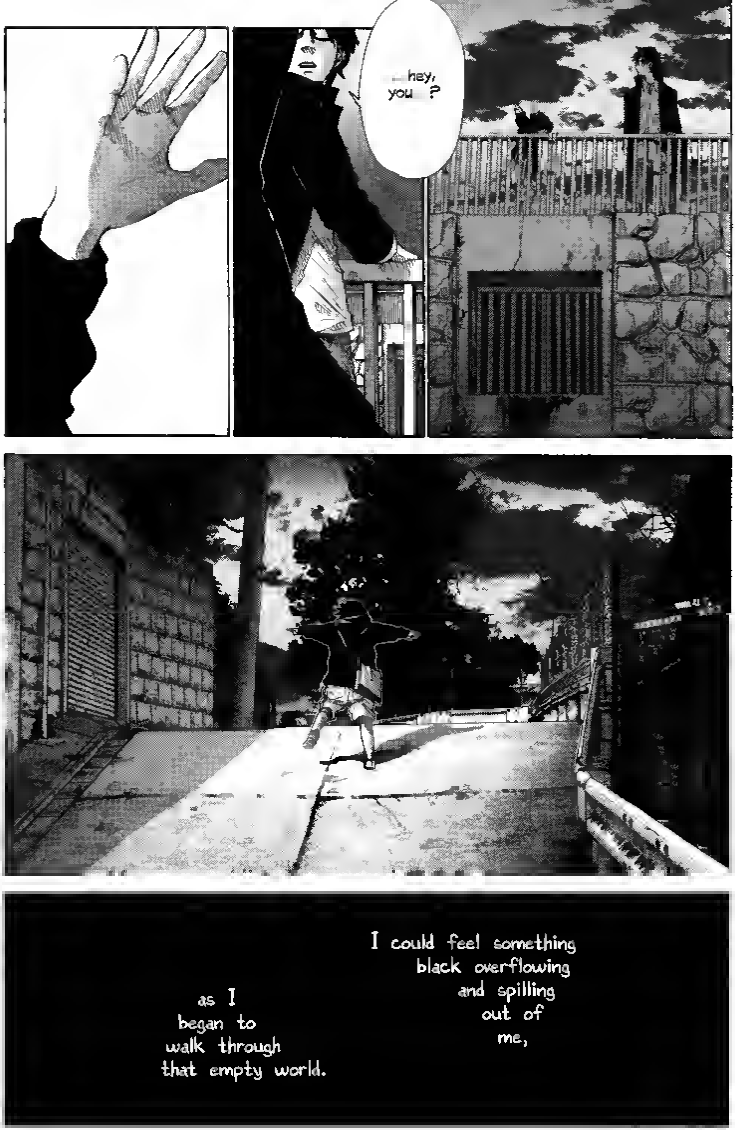
With the cold wind blowing through me,

I began to think that God, the magic box, the talking butterflies,

they had all never existed to begin with.

In which case,

what an empty world we live in.


...hey, you...?
I could feel something black overflowing and spilling out of me,
as I began to walk through that empty world.

When the rain that had been falling since last night finally abated,

the sky still hung low and leaden, threatening to pour again.

Wet times like these remind me of that day.

...no, technically they remind me of it more.

It isn't hard to recall memories that I spend nearly every day ruminating over.

But today, they come back more vividly than usual.

ピーポーピーポー

...um, good evening!

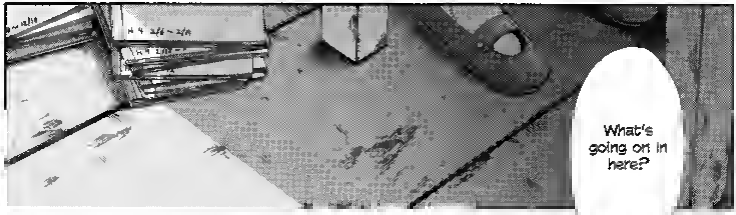
This is Arakawa

That waitress, Arakawa...
I'm pretty sure she knows more than she's letting on.
prism cafe
CLOSED
Huh... Closed today.
CLOSED

What are you looking up there for?

...Just thought I saw someone in the window up on the 2nd floor.
Hey, you can't just waltz in there.

What's with this?
The backdoor goes straight up to the upper floor?
...whoa.


What's going on in here?

CHAPTER 8

Wow, you really are good at cooking!

Heh heh... I was always thinking,
it's pretty wild that you run your own shop while you're still in your 20s.
Ha ha
What, you thought I was running that cafe without being able to cook? I get by
...well, I had some inheritance from my parents.
Not a whole lot, mind you
Oh...!
...huh? Oh, no!
Can't say that I am...
Don't feel bad, it's no big deal
...do you,
Though it would be nice to have a girlfriend
Are you seeing anyone right now?

...Mr. Higure.

Could I... be that person?

Looking back, it was quite a late first love.

I was in my last year of middle school at the time. I would skip after-school activities and read a book at Nijigahara.

The first time I met her there, she was crying.

I didn't know why she wept, but I found it beautiful.
She was clutching a butterfly pendant she claimed to have found in the river to her chest, and crying.
I felt a powerful distance and alienation from the rest of the world.
At the time I was surrounded by my parents and sister, who tried to live in filthy and despicable ways.
She gave one of her two butterfly pendants to me.
After that, we met at Nijigahara everyday.
But her white, shining limbs were like those of a human from another world.

I don't remember how things got that way,

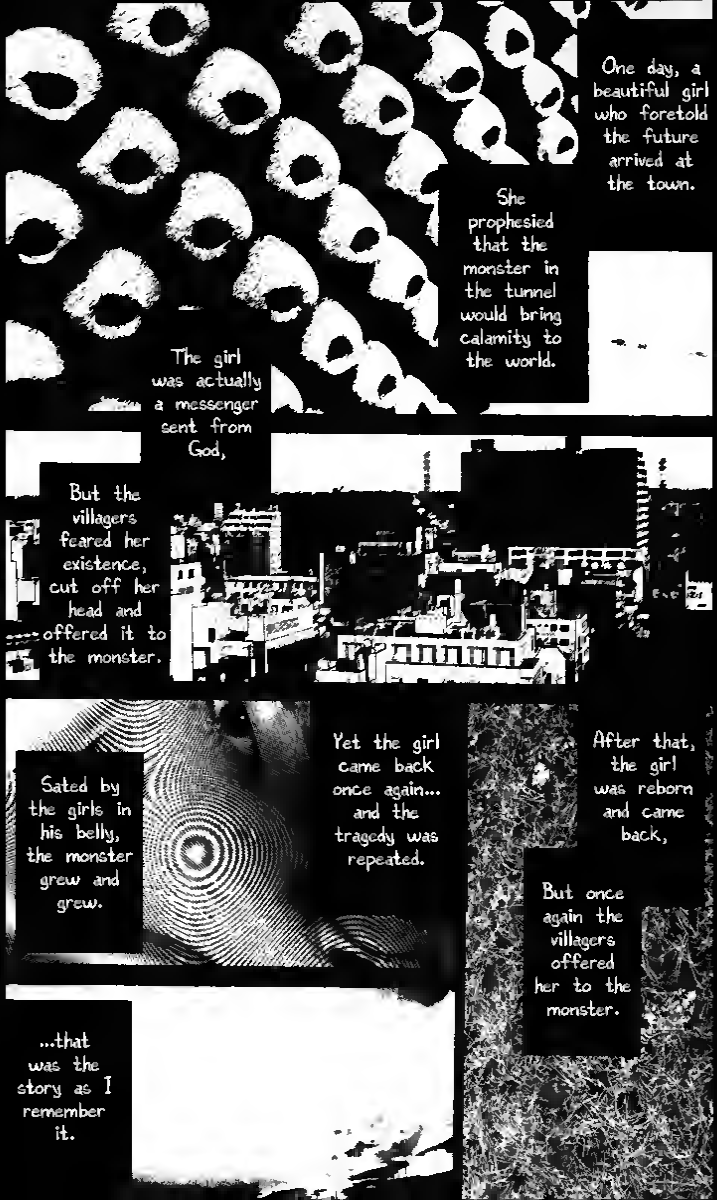
But the tale that grew every time we spoke of it slowly began to inform our view of the world.

After a while, we began to create a tale about "an imaginary place not like our world."

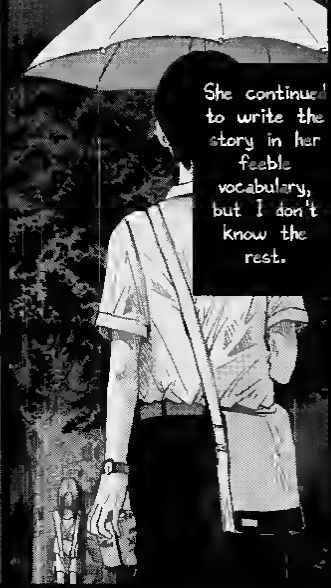
When I handed her the diary I no longer kept, she went into a rapture and wrote out her story.

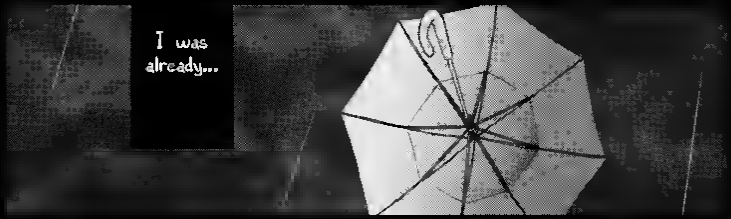
It went like this.

The story of the girl, the seven villagers, and the monster in the tunnel.


One day, a beautiful girl who foretold the future arrived at the town.
She prophesied that the monster in the tunnel would bring calamity to the world.
The girl was actually a messenger sent from God,
But the villagers feared her existence, cut off her head and offered it to the monster.
Sated by the girls in his belly, the monster grew and grew.
Yet the girl came back once again... and the tragedy was repeated.
After that, the girl was reborn and came back,
But once again the villagers offered her to the monster.
...that was the story as I remember it.

By that time, I had already lost interest in the story.


She continued to write the story in her feeble vocabulary, but I don't know the rest.

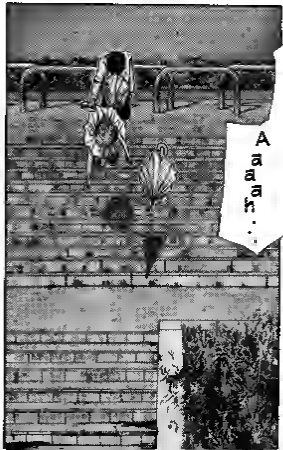

I was already...

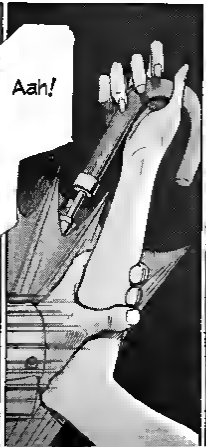
No...
I'm sure there's something wrong with me... Ha ha.
I'm sorry... This must have been my fault.
No, I broke it and threw it away.
. I guess you didn't hang up that painting I made for you
Huh?
Nijigahara wasn't such a trite, worn-out sight.
You just don't understand what beauty truly is.
You're a sad case.

...this long hair doesn't suit you
Your heavy makeup and filthy black pussy,
and the mole right beside it. You don't need them either.
...s...
Stop!!
...you're acting crazy, bose...

How so?

Huff!!


Aaaah...


Aah!

Huff!!

...look at your terror...
It's a terrible, hideous face...
You didn't have to leave in such a rush
Not at all like here
The look on her face...

...was too much for me, and I ran.
After that, she never came back.

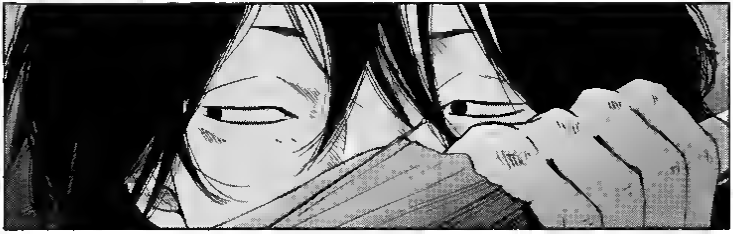
I feel a deep regret at what I did.

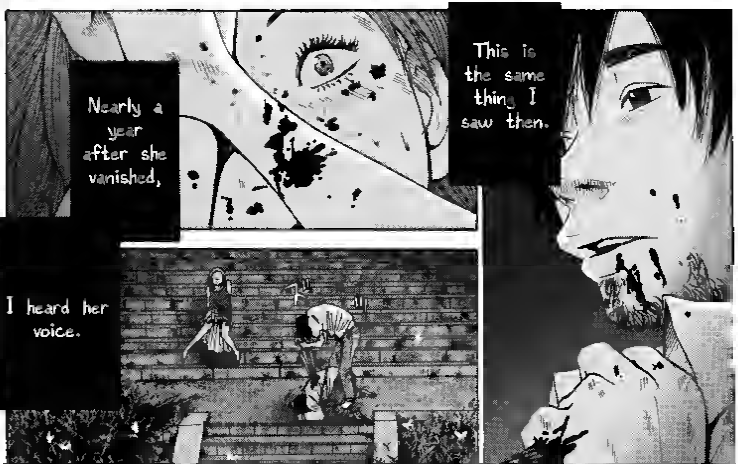
When I think about how her story still lives on, despite the fact that I cannot find her no matter how hard I look...

After that, I would learn by coincidence that our story had spread to the children in the area.

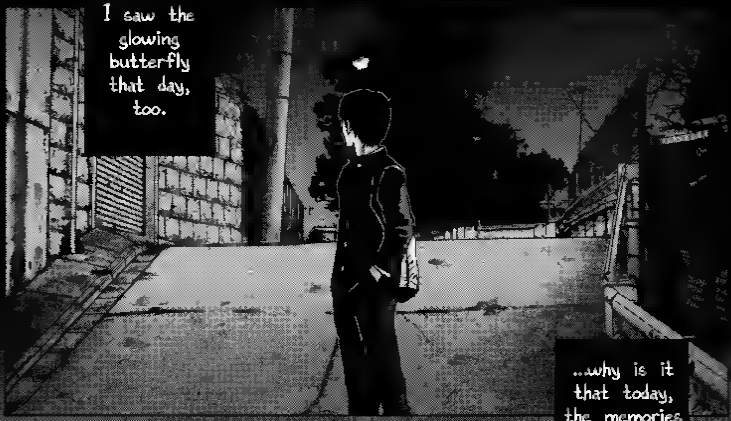
...Stars?

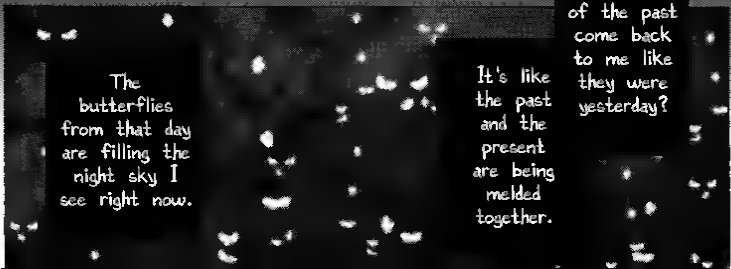
...No, not quite.




Nearly a year after she vanished,
This is the same thing I saw then.
I heard her voice.

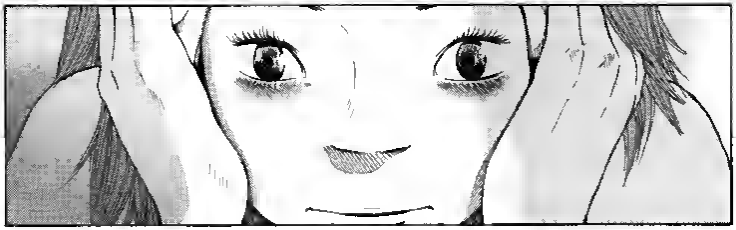
"I can see, I can see.
I can see everything
that happens in the world."





...which means it's time to go back to the room.

I must continue to write our story together.



sign Murder Investigation

The butterflies are coming to take me away...

They're coming to take me away to eternity.

The butterflies separated fate are becoming one...

Remember what we talked about before?

トン

トン

トン

I think we're going to move again after all.

トン

トン

トン

トン

We had a lot of discussion before coming to this conclusion.

You don't like living out in this country dump either, do you?

トン
トン
So we're going to start over,
in a different place, far far away

I don't mind, because I know Father loves me.
But you're probably bored and lonely by yourself

But only me and him, not you. You'll be dead

...just kidding.
Now where could he have gone...?

Here you are, again. You certainly are dedicated.

And what does that make you, since you always watch me, every morning?

Due to family circumstances, I will be leaving this town.

...so, Mr. Suzuki,

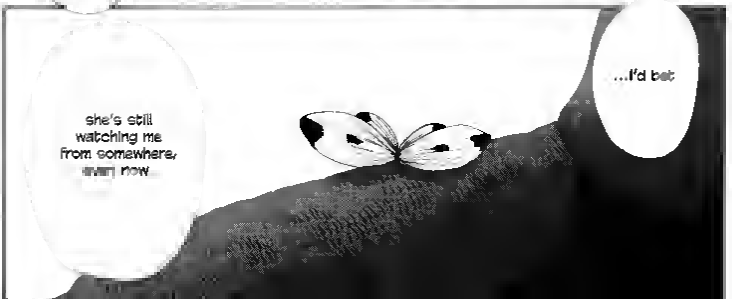
you finally feel like talking to me.

...and how is your son?

Just because I'm leaving doesn't mean that *she* becomes yours!!
Remember this...

She was never anyone's Never will be

She was always looking too far off into the distance...
You wouldn't understand my loneliness...
I have always been waiting for my judgment...


...I'd bet
she's still watching me from somewhere, even now...

Once Zhuangzi dreamed he was a butterfly,

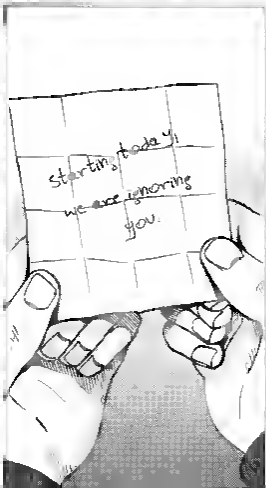
a fluttering butterfly

He fluttered hither and thither as a butterfly in his dreams,

until he did not know he was Zhuangzi

Upon waking, he found he was Zhuangzi,

But he did not know whether he had dreamed he was a butterfly, or a butterfly had dreamed it was him



Yes
As a matter of fact, I am too I'm going to work for my father
Ms Sakaki,
I heard from the principal that you're leaving next year.
...how would you like to get dinner tonight?
...what is it?
I'm afraid I have prior arrange-ments...
...Ms Sakaki,
you've really become quite beautiful lately

...your diary?
You have to write about the entire day in it. It's still only lunchtime right now
1-5

Even if I did write about it,
it doesn't mean you'd really read it

CHAPTER 9

I thought things would work out here.

I had a faint glimmer of hope inside me.

When I transferred to this school,

But in the end,

the same thing ended up happening.

C'mon guys,

let's just stop this

But being the idiot that I am,

I just couldn't let some things pass.

There it is.

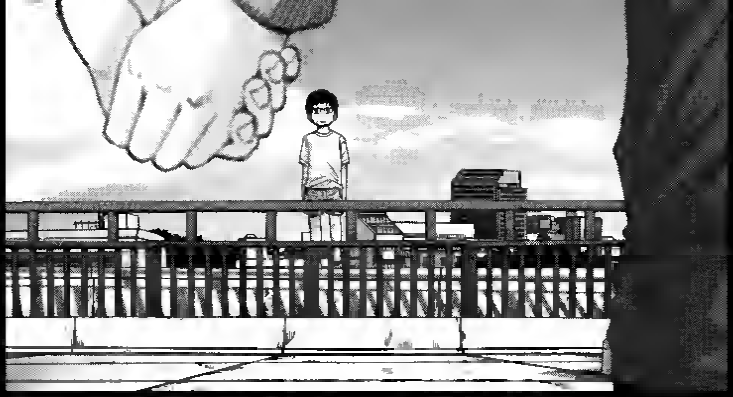
Again.

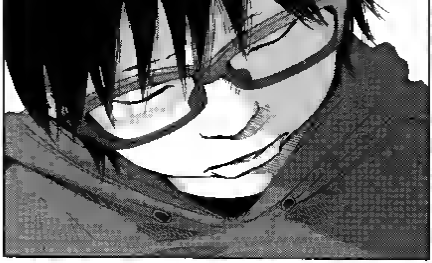
The same sight.

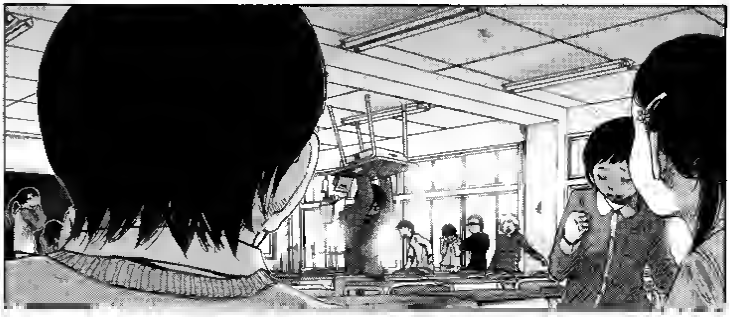
We're so happy that we won,
Hana Ichi Monme

We're so sad that we lost,
Hana Ichi Monme

"We don't need you."

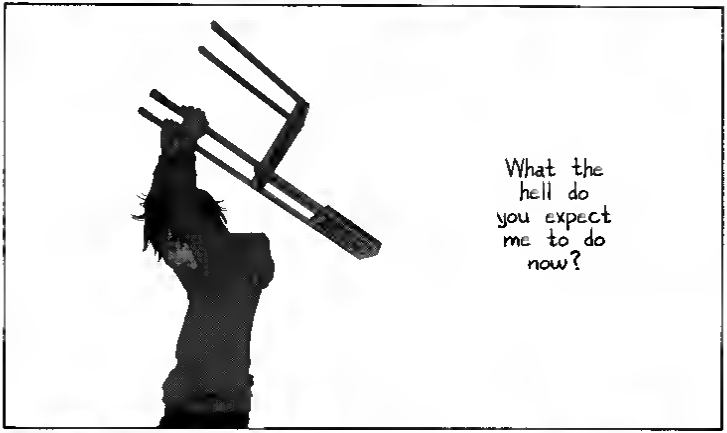






But here I am,
still alive.

Through God's whim, or sheer luck,
for some reason
I'm still alive.


What the hell do you expect me to do now?

...I'm sorry!!

...I'm sorry, Suzuki.

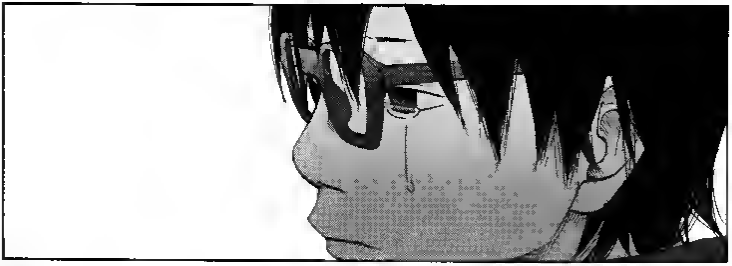
...please, just stop

I won't betray you.

...Higure,

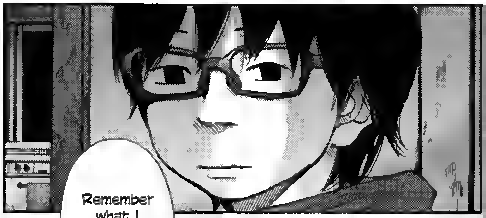
...why?

Because I love you.



Meet me tonight,

on the embankment at Nijigahara.



Remember what I mentioned earlier?

It looks like we're going to move after all.

Welcome home.

...I'm sorry you have to be dragged around like this...
So you'll be in another new school in April...
...are you listening to me?

It's a fire.
Rather pretty.

By the way, the building on fire
is my house

Hey.
You waiting for someone at this time of night?

My life is finally about to begin.

Aha ha ha ha!!
...ha ha...

...you did it?

A stronger, much stronger will
...keep a strong will.

...But here you are, still alive.

Hayato Wakamatsu, the insufferable little snot,

now a member of the city police

...you surprised?

Time really passes in a blink, doesn't it

We've got the murder of the market owner and now the cafe owner...

You're about to be called in as a reference to both cases

...Look, Arakawa,

I don't know exactly what you've gotten caught up in,

But I'm going to keep you out of harm's way!!

Huh?!

H... Hey, wait!!

You can't just go back there...

Besides, this is
Arie Kimura
There's nobody in here.
Are you kidding...?
...there was just someone in here...
She's still sleeping, you know that?
See? It's Kimura
Even though we've practically forgotten all about her, she's been sleeping here since that day.

What's she been dreaming about, the past ten years?

It's always been bugging me, deep down, all this time.

Why...

Why did we do it?

huh?

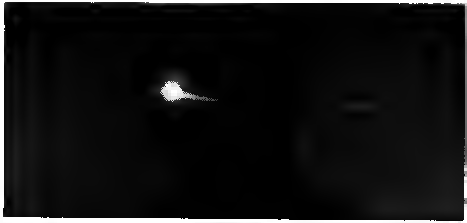
...flowers?

It's harder to walk, with all the water from the rain yesterday.

Even today,

I wander through the tunnels,

letting the glowing butterfly guide me.



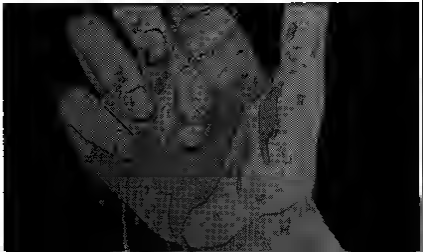
For an instant, it felt like the light came not from a butterfly, but an eye.

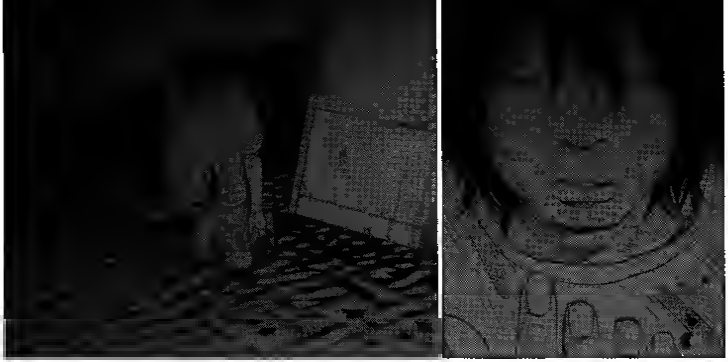
And it reminded me of her story,

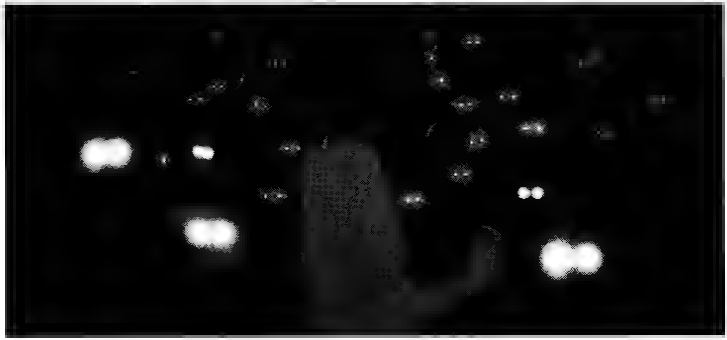
the story of the monster in the tunnel.

Is this one-eyed monster

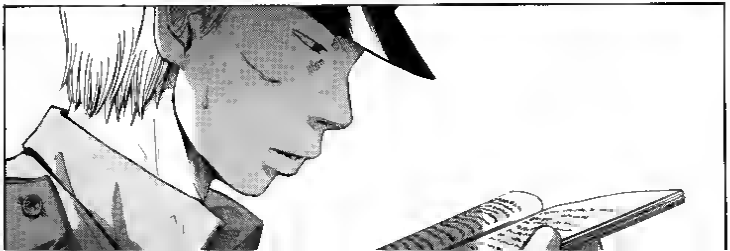
trying to tell me something?



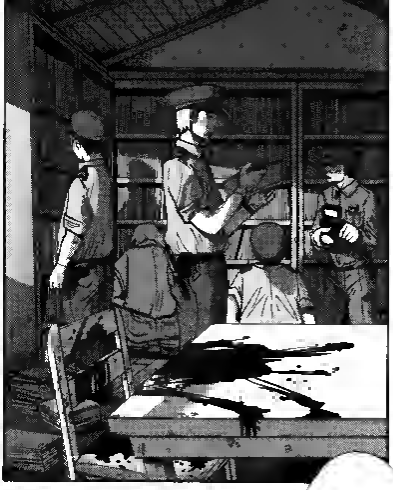




CHAPTER 10



These 2-3 hours are gonna be the moment of truth for the cafe owner.



Mr. Komatsuzaki was hospitalized when he was 11 after a fall, and was admitted often for quite a while afterwards

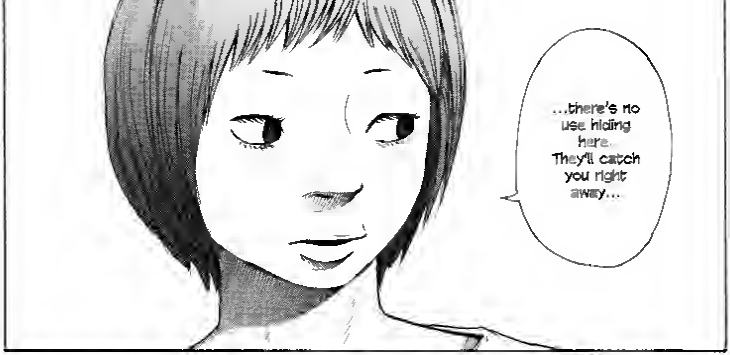
The actual injury was no more than a good bruise ...

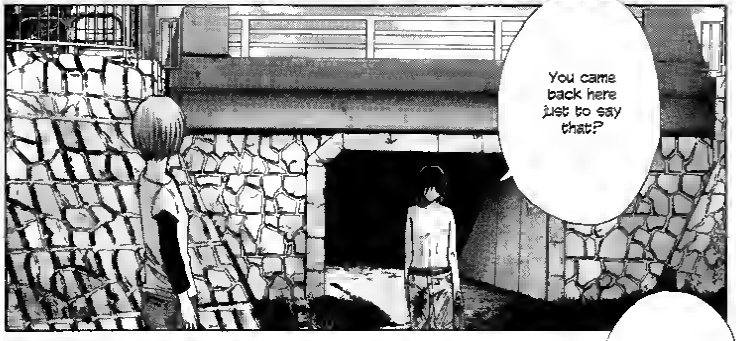
... but, mentally, we noted severe loss of personality

For example, he would lose recognition of who he was, suddenly find himself in far away places...

...and occasionally,

spoke as though his imagination was reality.


...there's no use hiding here... They'll catch you right away...


You came back here just to say that?

I've finally found what I was looking for...

...thank you for helping me yesterday...
But...

The one who deserves to have this is coming

What do you mean...?
The promised day is almost upon us.
You have to hand it over

the butterflies

separated by fate
are becoming one.

Man will return to the timeflow

of peace and tranquility.

His parents were old friends of mine.

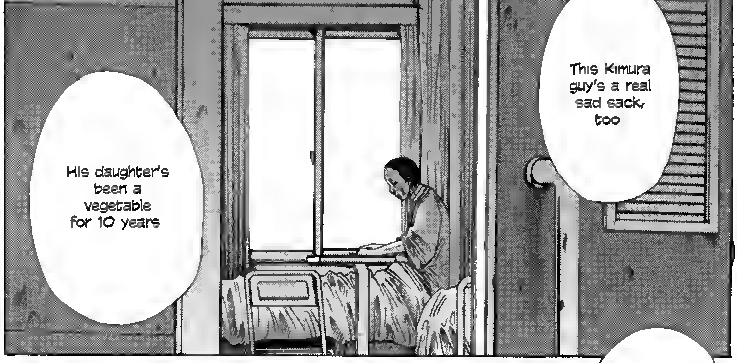
...friends of the family, you could say

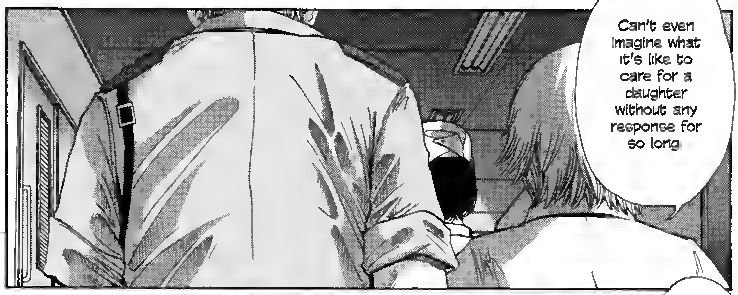
He lost both of his parents while in middle school, I believe. It was very sad.

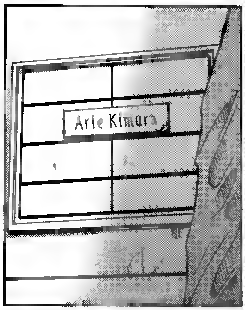
He was like a son, to me.

Komatsuzaki is a good boy.

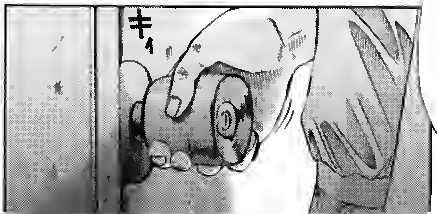
I'm sure this was his way of doing me a kindness...


This Kimura guy's a real sad sack, too
His daughter's been a vegetable for 10 years

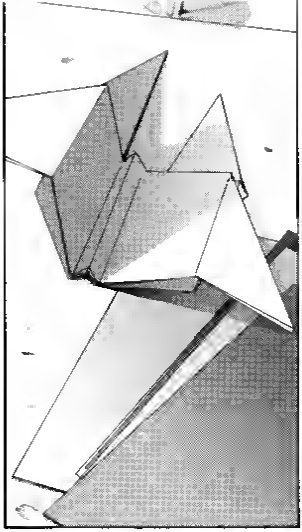

Can't even imagine what it's like to care for a daughter without any response for so long

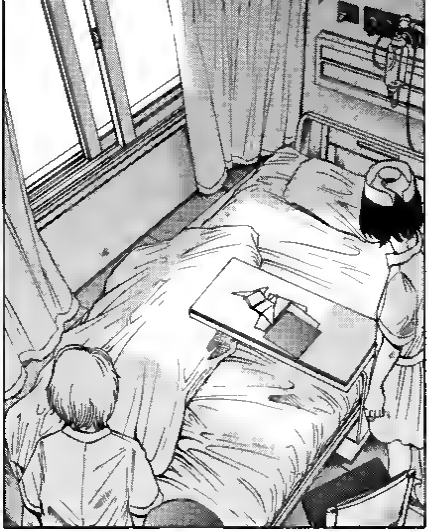

Arie Kimura

...hey, are you listening or what?
This is Arie Kimura's room



Wait a sec...
She's standin' up...
Your daughter is...!!
Mr. Kimura!!
Hurry!
We gotta tell the father!!
A
A
A





Wh...
Why?!
Oh...

What was done, was done.

and that was that.

but the darkness gave no answer.

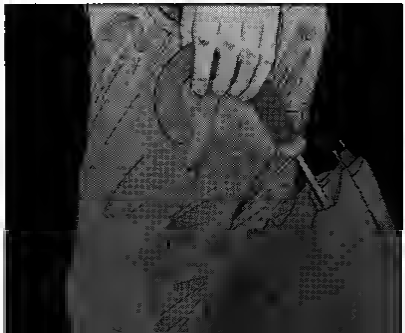
For an instant, I wondered if my choice was truly the right one,

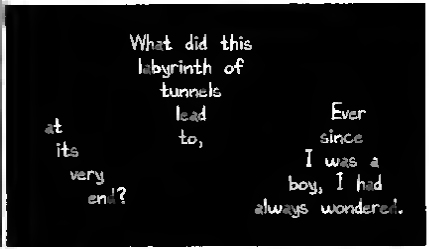
Having completed my duty, I went further, further into the tunnel than ever before.

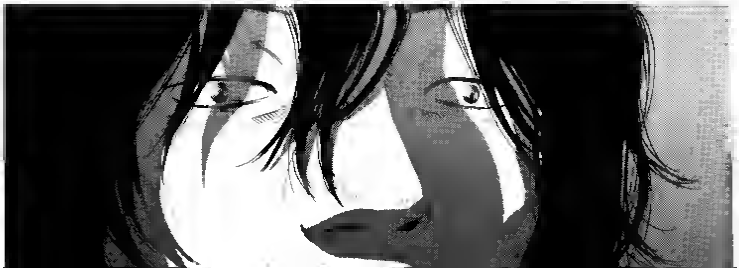
leading to new resolve.

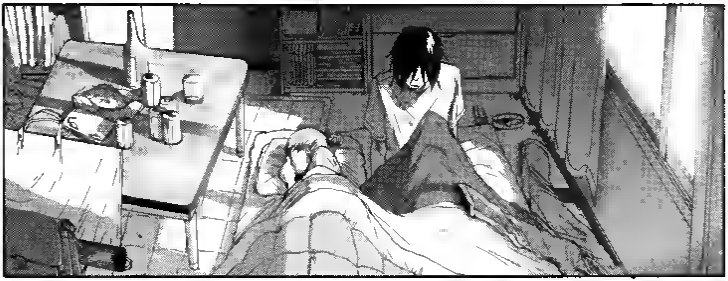
my resolve hardened further,

Every time I took a step forward,




What did this labyrinth of tunnels lead to,
at its very end!?
Ever since I was a boy, I had always wondered.

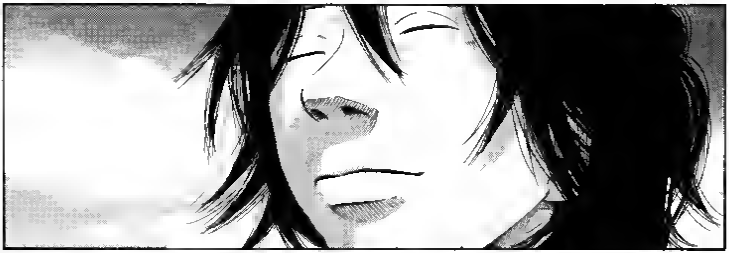


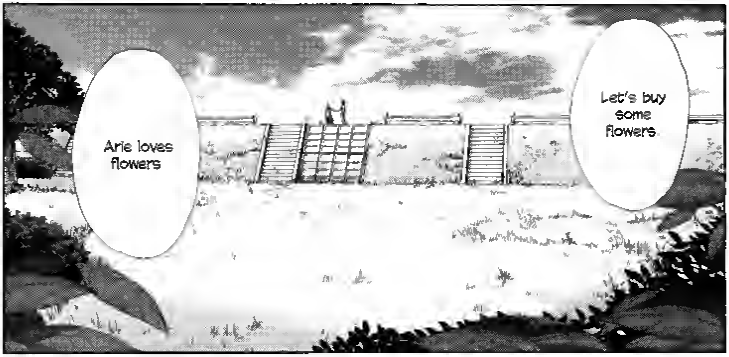


...who are you?

...Huh?
Who am I?
I'm Arakawa, your new girlfriend as of today!
Are you the kind of guy who forgets everything when he drinks?
...no,
I remember everything, like it was yesterday.
...In which case,
you remember that we decided to pay Kimura a visit in the hospital tomorrow?

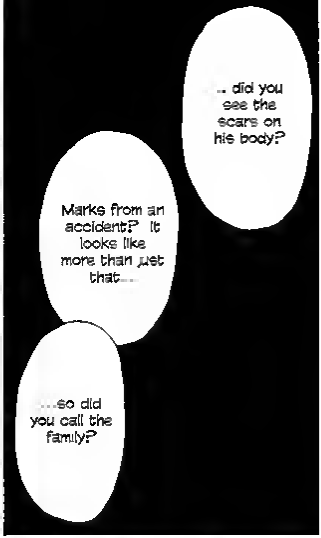
what's up?
...oh, I just figured, if I'd be taking work off tomorrow, might as well skip it today as well
Ha ha! Why not?!
Wanna go do something today, then?




Let's buy some flowers
Arie loves flowers

My God! Talk about irresponsible!
Yeah, I think their family situation is sensitive, to say the least...

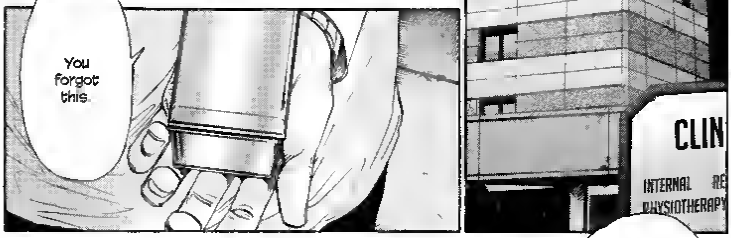
Mother answered, said she couldn't even be bothered to come in...


...did you see the scars on his body?
Marks from an accident? It looks like more than just that...
...so did you call the family?

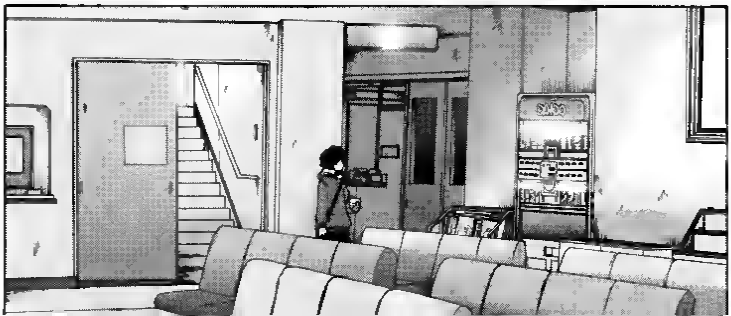
Does the poor kid even know?

Dunno...

Ah, hang on a second.
HOSPITAL

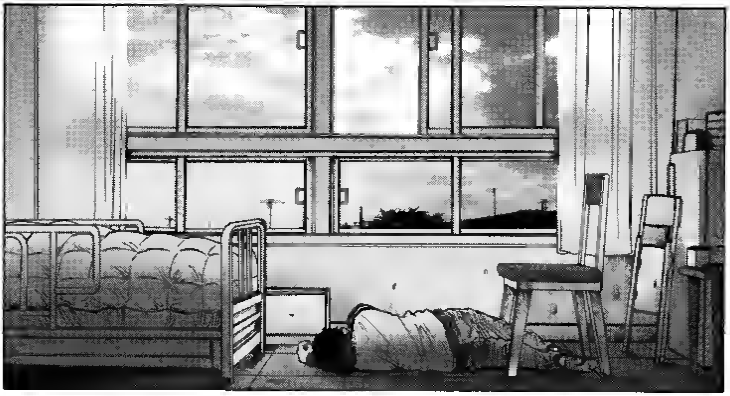

You forgot this.
CLIN
INTERNAL RE
PHYSIOTHERAPY

You were clutching it when they brought you in.
Must be important to you, right?



Not yet
It's not yet time for the awakening
And until then...

Goodbye.

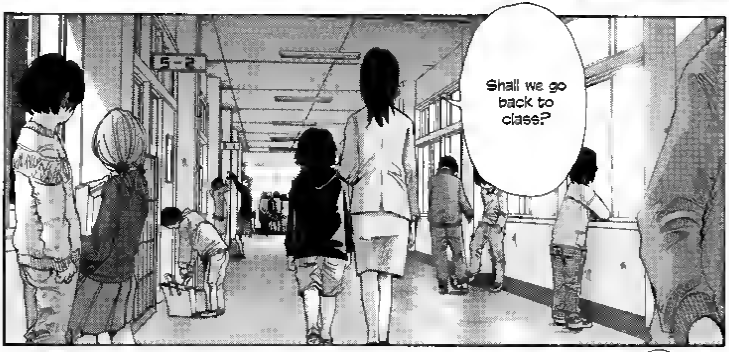


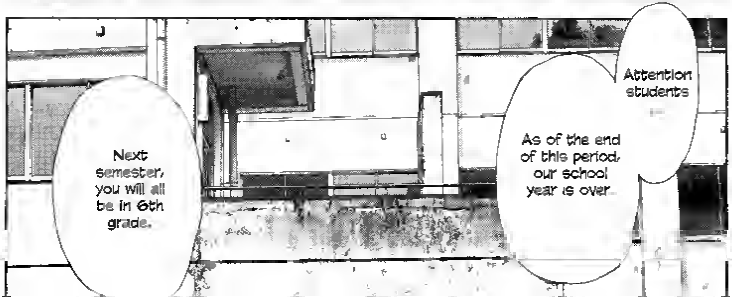
This is actually my last day as a teacher.
I'm being put in charge of one of my father's supermarkets.

Mr. Kimura, I can see you've had a lot of trouble.
You can't keep working the job you have now for long, can you?
Diploma
Kimura, Arto
This certificate signifies the
curriculum has been passe
been met for the year

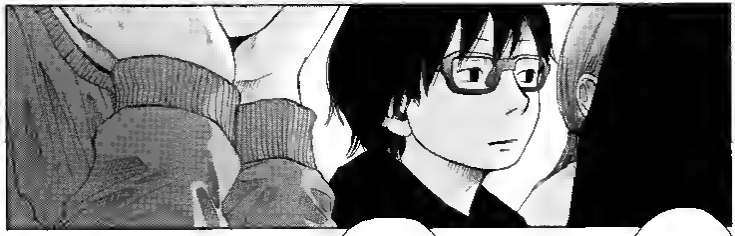
Would you like to take a job at my store?

...thank you. Thank you.
It's times like these we need to give each other a helping hand.
There, there.
Suzuki


Shall we go back to class?

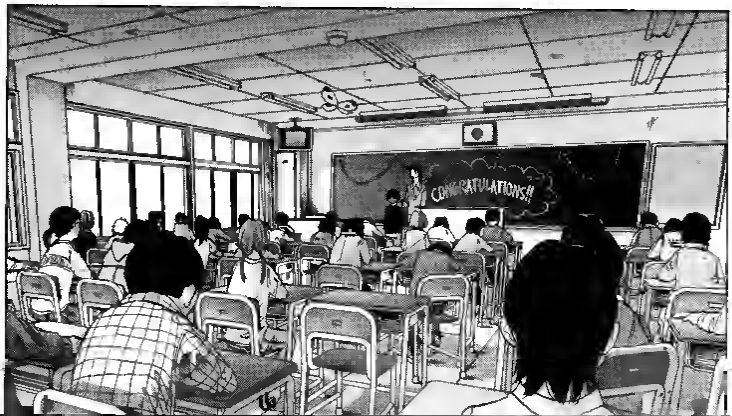

Attention students.
As of the end of this period, our school year is over.
Next semester, you will all be in 6th grade.

CONGRATULATIONS!!
The two years I spent with you in 4th and 5th grade...
As it happens, I will no longer be a teacher next year.



I'm sad that I won't be there to see you graduate,
But I hope that you will all continue
to live bright and enjoyable lives
Are very special memories for me

Also...
I must inform you that Suzuki will be transferring away
Come up to the front, Suzuki...

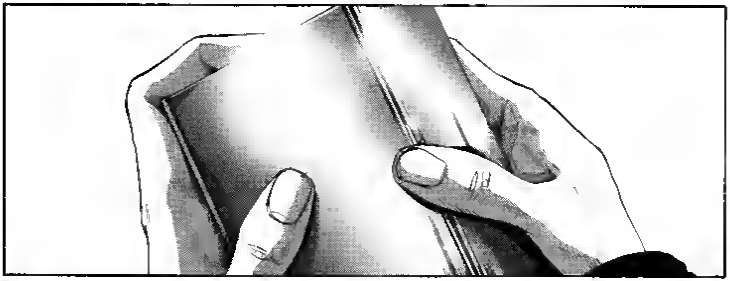

CONGRATULATIONS!!

How am I
supposed to
feel right
now?

I'm
empty.

The sunset
that day

was redder
than usual.



Inside this box is a
special magic that
can make any
wish come
true, but
only once.

If I
wanted to,

I could
even end the
world, right now.

This is
my
memory
from
when I
was 10.

I don't even
remember
where that
tin box is,
much less
what I did
with it
then.

The
world
certainly
didn't
come to
an end,

and it's
still just
as unfair
and
wretched
as it
always
was.

On his deathbed in the hospital, he told me that I was the prior son of his previous wife. Not his.

My mother died when I was 18, and six months ago my father joined her.

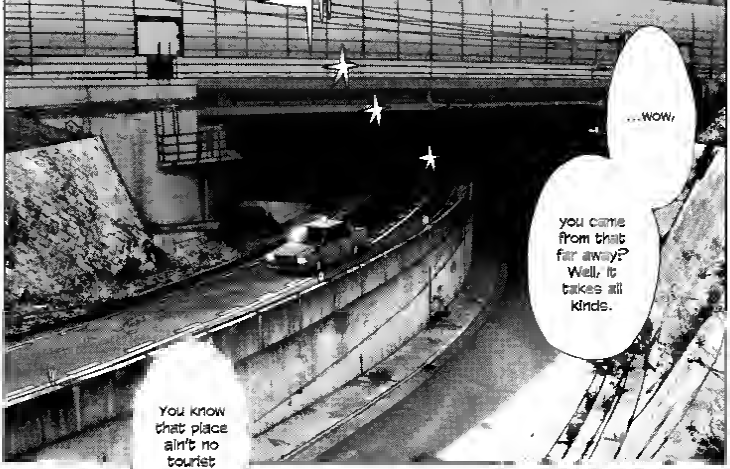
But over time, I simply found that I had become an adult.

That's all there was to it.

as if guided here.

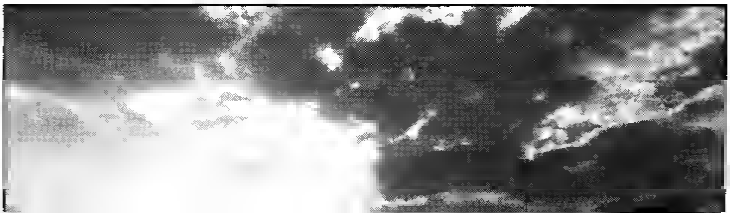
I came back to this town for the first time in 10 years,

CHAPTER 11


...wow,
you came from that far away? Well, it takes all kinds.
You know that place ain't no tourist spot?

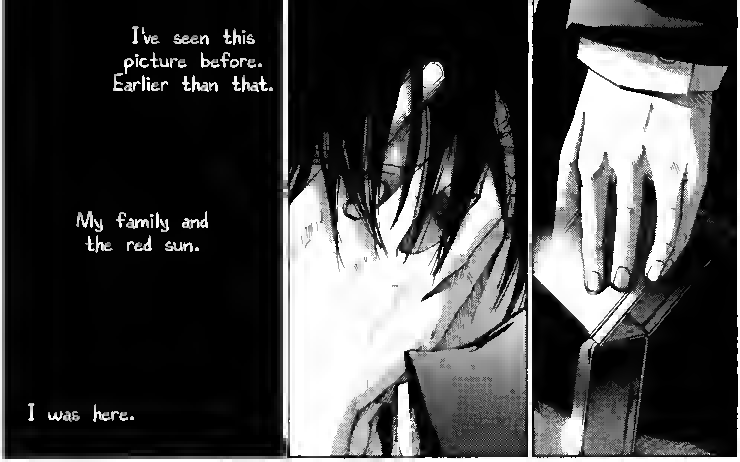
There's nothing there. Just a tiny, boring town

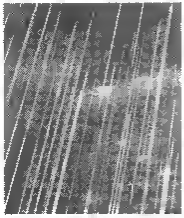
I've heard my birth mother's grave is there.



...hey, you...?
Now I remem-ber...
I gave the magic box to a grown-up; a stranger.
Just like this...

...that's
right.


I've seen this picture before. Earlier than that.
My family and the red sun.
I was here.



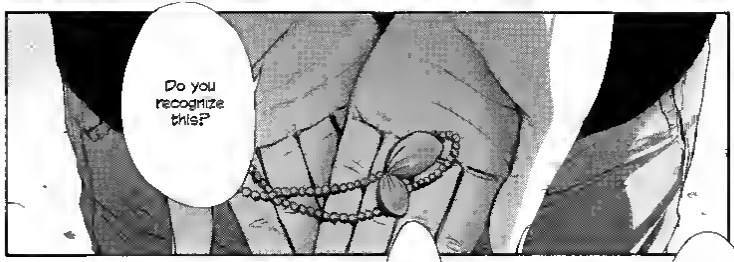
My legs carried me right up to the grave, and stopped.

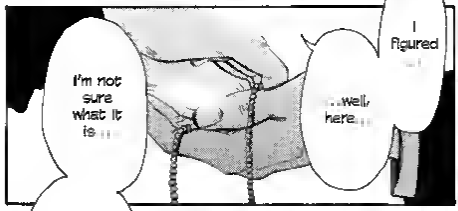
I had no proof that it was my mother's,

but I felt too uncomfortable to doubt it.

The upper right corner of the gravestone was worn away, giving it an unnatural roundness.

Excuse me...
I know this might seem rude, coming out of nowhere, but...


Do you recognize this?

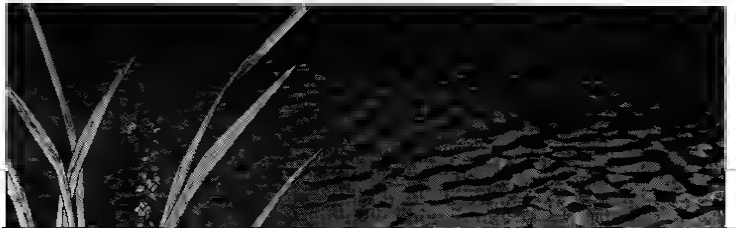

I figured...
...well, here...
I'm not sure what it is...

Oh...

But I think you're meant to have it...

...how should I say this...?
I don't know. I don't want to know.
...But where did you get it...?
You've certainly changed a lot...
HIGURE
Don't ask me anything.

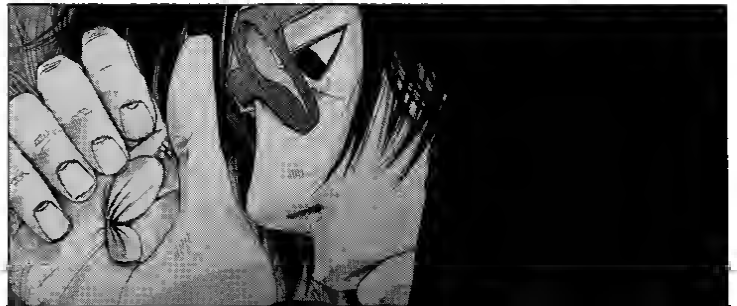
CHAPTER 12



For example...

If I'd felt like raping her, or cutting my own throat, I should have been able to do it.

No doubt I will continue to make a disgrace of myself as life goes on.



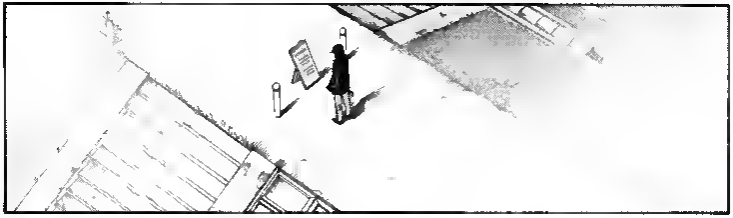
How many times I've had that thought.

The world should just end already.

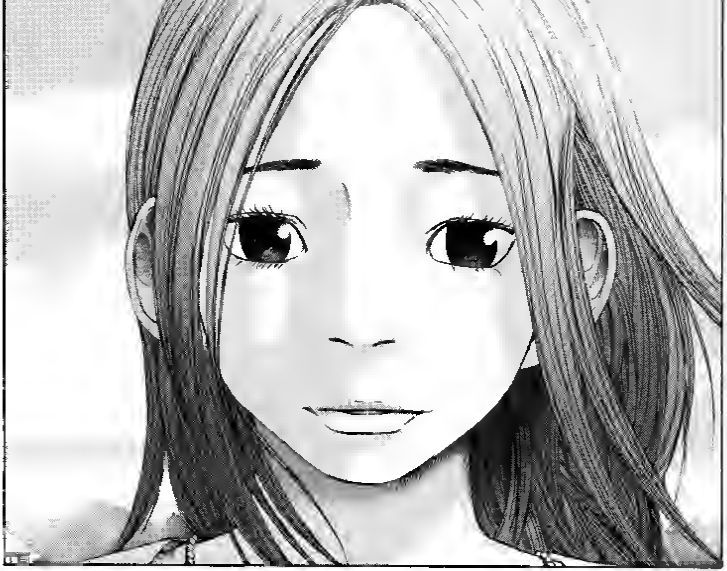
But the world never ends.

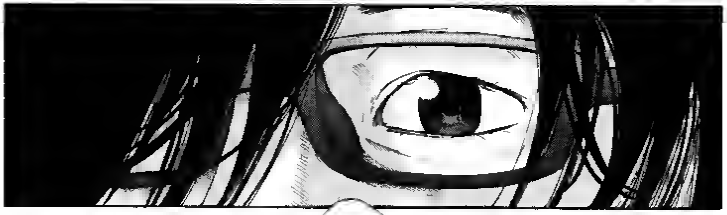
You see that?

There was no god after all.



NOTICE OF CONSTRUCTION
WE APPRECIATE THE UNDERSTANDING AND COOPERATION OF THE RESIDENTIAL RESIDENTS

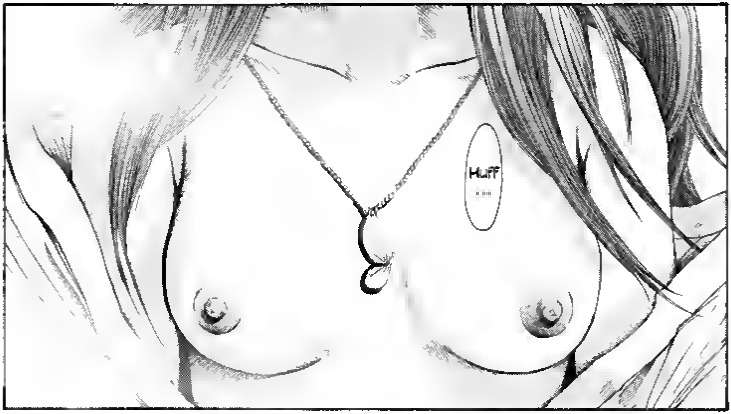




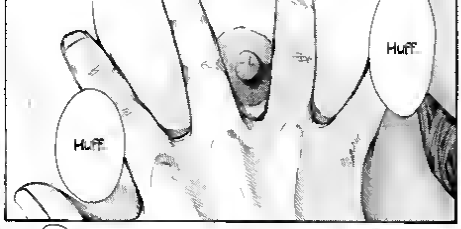
Finally we meet.

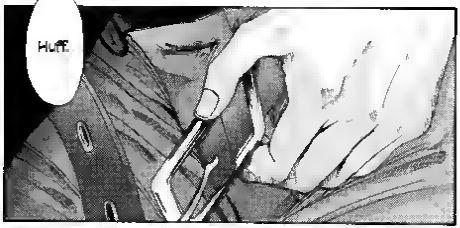
I can see everything
that happens in the world
...but you don't have to suffer anymore
All is forgiven

Huff
...
huff


Huff
...

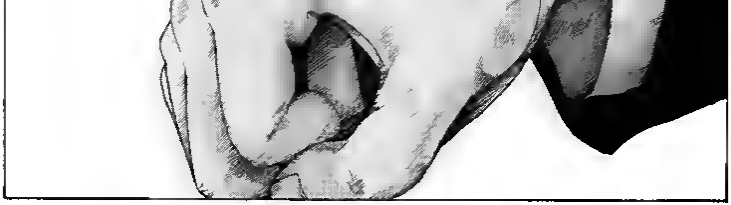
Huff

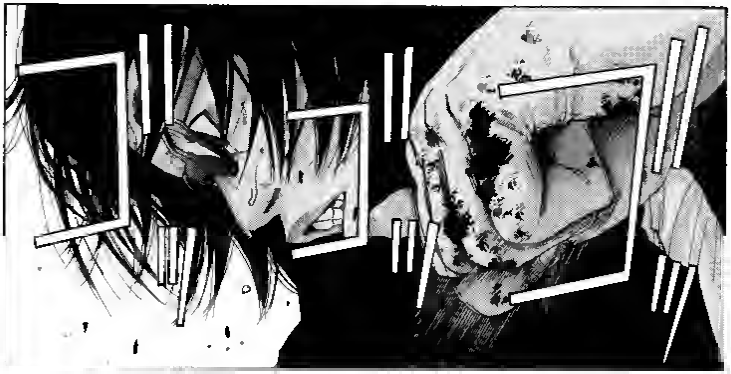

Huff.
Huff.


Huff.

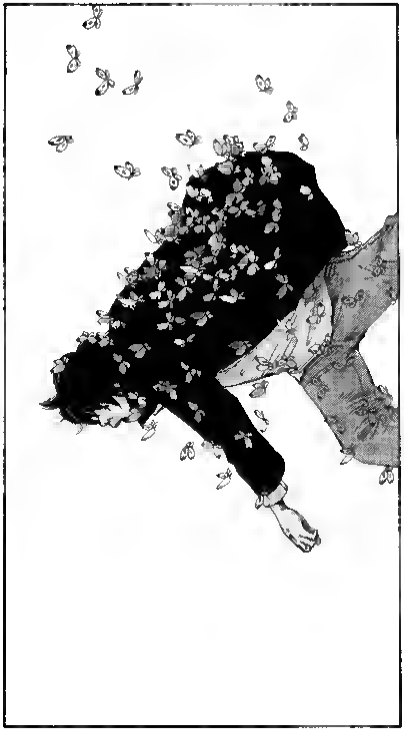
I can hear Mommy's voice.
See?

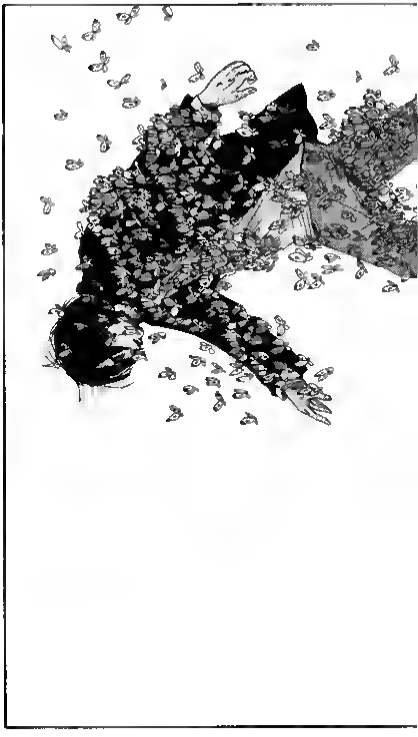
Big Brother.

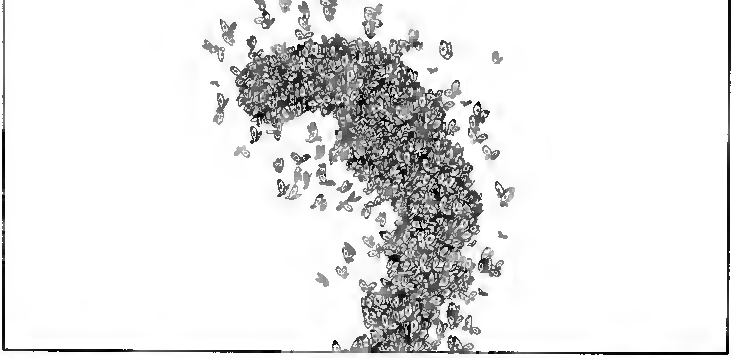


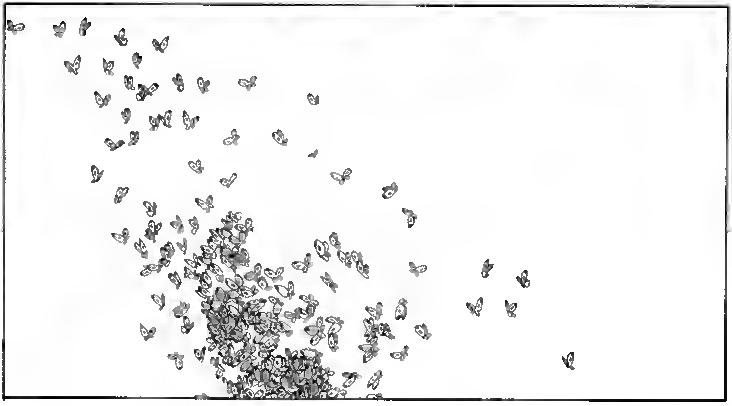


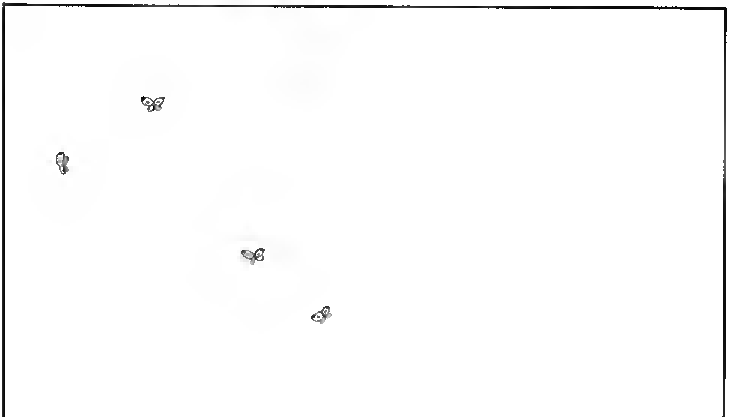
M
Mom

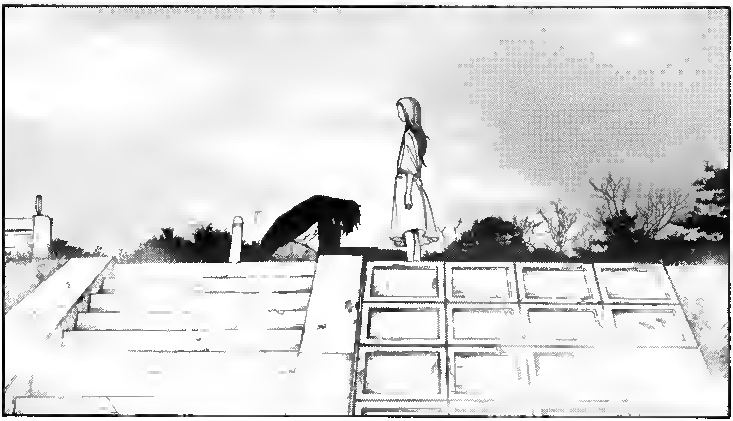


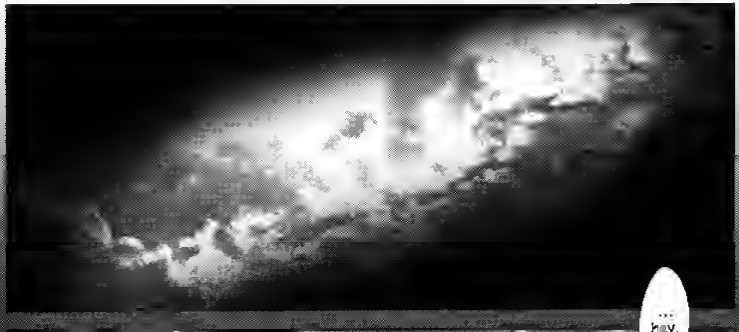











...
Hey.

...Hey!!

...oh.
I'm sorry.
It just felt so good. I started to nod off.

...were you having that dream again?
...yes.

I abandoned my body and become nothing but a soul.
when my soul turned into butterflies.
and I watched what happened in the world for years and years...

God said He was tired of the world
As I went deeper and deeper, I heard a voice...
And one day,
everyone would just disappear.
It must have been God.
Is that...
The end of the world?
It's not the end
It's eternal.

...W-What do you mean?
Does that mean I'm supposed to suffer for eternity...?
Tell me that isn't so...
There is no God!!

Don't be afraid
It all depends on you.

...the bizarre outbreak of butterflies around the nation continues to grow,
and farming communities are beginning to be affected...

They're just gone.

God, these butterflies are obnoxious...
Komatsuzaki and that Arakawa girl.
Oh hey, you hear about that woman who committed suicide in the tunnel near Nijigahara?

If there is a God, I've got a question for him.
According to experts, this kind of rampant population explosion presents serious problems to the ecosystem...
Why'd ya make human beings this way?
10 years ago, a woman cut her own throat in the same spot.
It must be...
The monster! The monster is on the loose...
Next, the weather.
What? The hell you talkin' about?

AAA

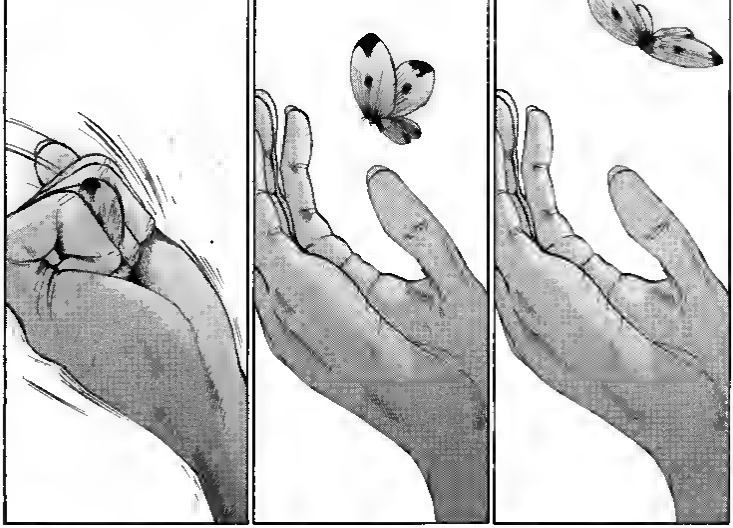
AAA-

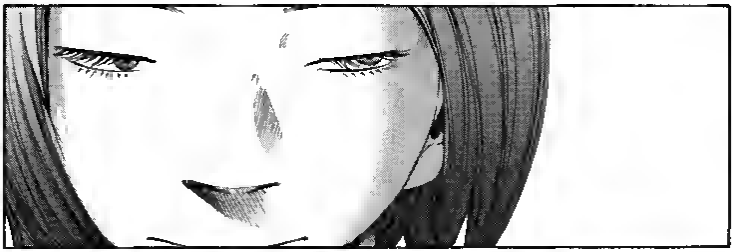
AH!

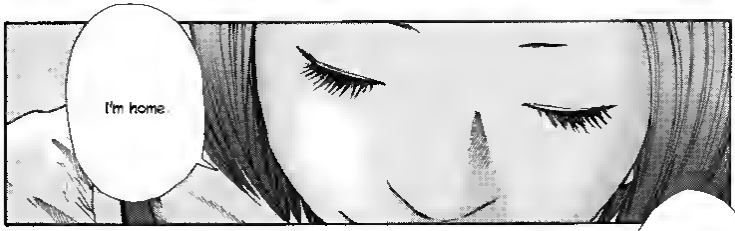
AA-

Clear skies are expected all over the nation.

It should be 2-3 degrees warmer than usual. Good laundry hanging weather!



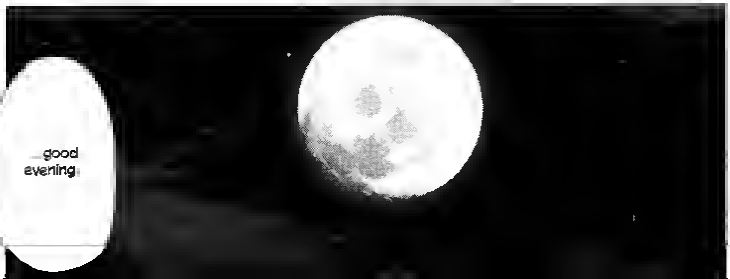


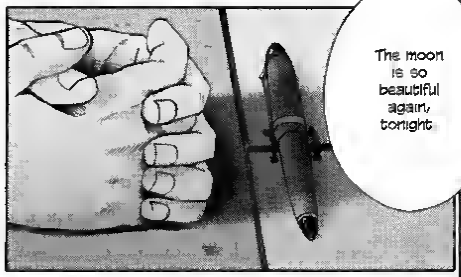

I'm home.

I'll get started on dinner right away.

Sorry for being late.

You never learn...
You'll never leave this place for the rest of your life.
...did you spend all day staring outside again?

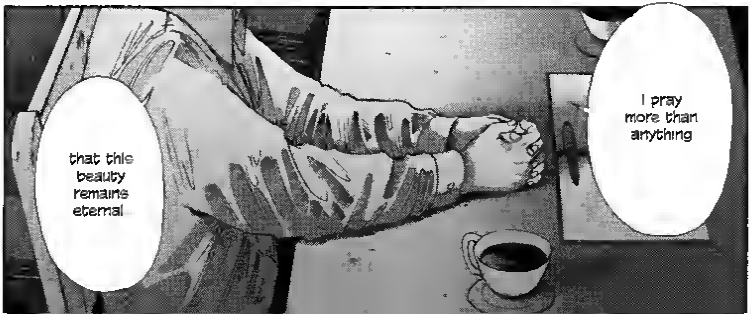

...good evening.


The moon is so beautiful again, tonight

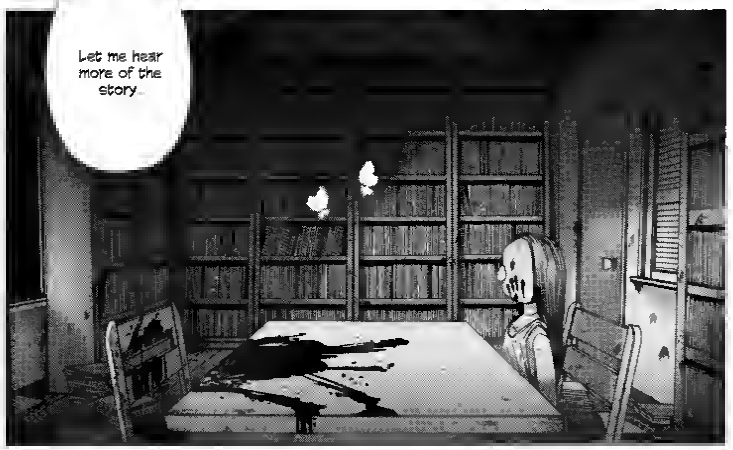
prism cafe

But the sight of you reflected in the moonlight

is even more beautiful than I can say.


I pray more than anything
that this beauty remains eternal

...okay.


Let me hear more of the story.

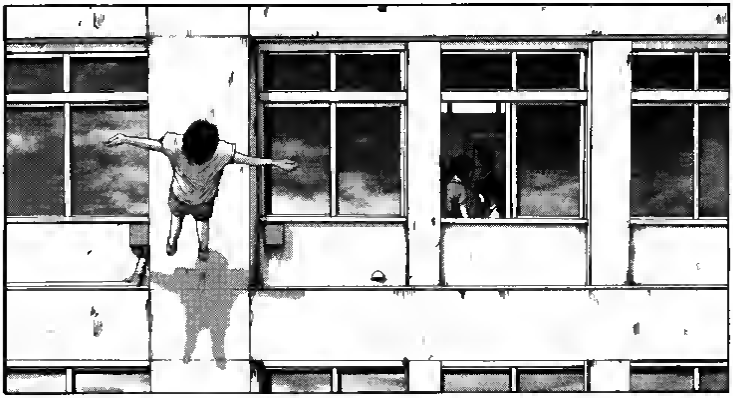
...come on.

...come on.

How long are you going to lie there?

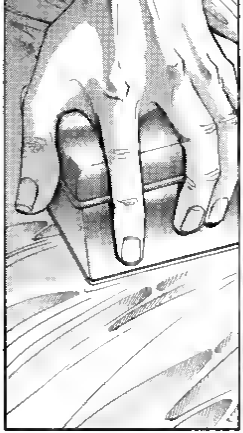
Get up already.

Don't
assume you
can pretend
to sleep
forever.



C'mon, Suzuki, you can do it!!
I know you can stand already!
You're not going to get any better unless you try!

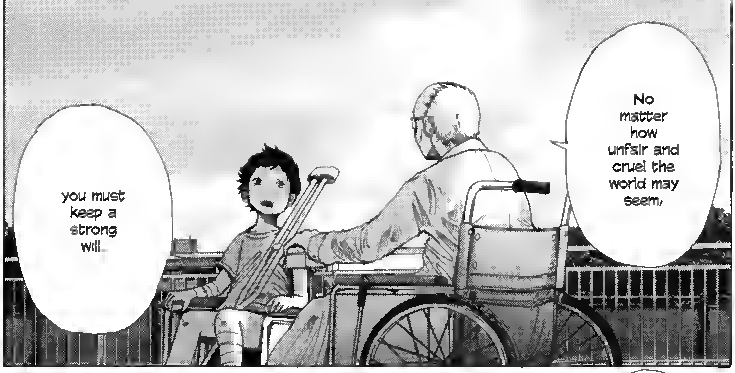
...if that's how you feel,
then fine. I give up.
...you there

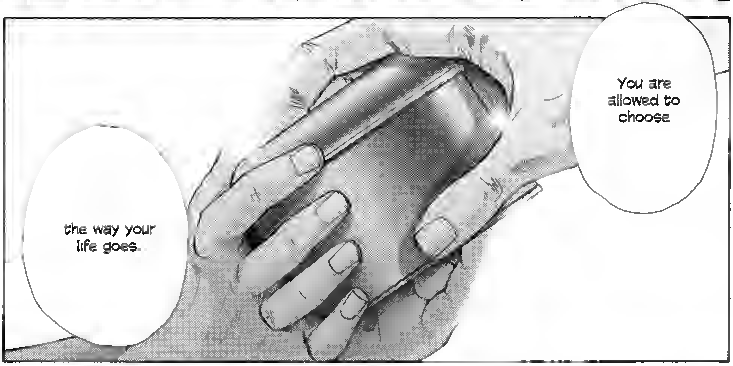


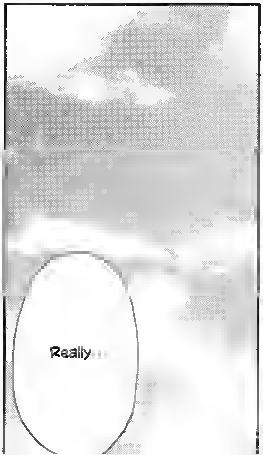
Stop your crying.

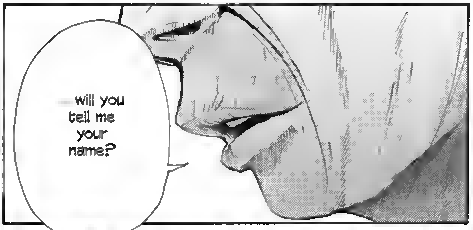
Let me give this to you.
It's a magic box with a spell inside.

Whether you open the lid or not
is up to you.
However...


No matter how unfair and cruel the world may seem,
you must keep a strong will...


You are allowed to choose
the way your life goes.


Really...


...will you tell me your name?

...Amahiko

It just so happens...

That's my name, too.